

KOMOTION



International

Four looting suspects in police custody in the Over town section of Miami, which had two nights of disturbances.

#2



# KOMOTION

BECAUSE WE CELEBRATE LIFE AND BATTLE  
BECAUSE WE ARE NOT SATISFIED  
BECAUSE IT IS UP TO US  
BECAUSE WE LOVE TO SING AND DANCE  
BECAUSE THE PRESSURE IS UPON US  
BECAUSE THERE ARE GOVERNMENTS AND  
BORDERS AND COPS AND COURTS  
BECAUSE THE BOUNDRIES MUST BE BROKEN  
BECAUSE WE ARE OUT OF CONTROL  
BECAUSE THEY SAID WE COULDN'T DO IT  
BECAUSE WE FEEL LIKE IT

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# WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

Everything's changed and nothing's changed. Everything's in chaos and nothing's happening. There's songs of revolution on the pop charts but there damn sure ain't no revolution in the streets!

Yet.

It's easy to get confused. If these motherfuckers can take *revolutionary* art and sell it, then what's the point of making it? If they can turn every attempt we make at attacking and *hurting* them into McCulture, then what *can* we do!?

**"...If these motherfuckers can take *REVOLUTIONARY* art and sell it, then what's the point of making it?"**

If we're to make any sense out of this shit, we've got to start with ATTITUDE! Not by posturing, not by posing, not by *acting* BAD like some people want us to think they are--but by knowing that no scumbag pimp in the headquarters of Metropolitan Corporate Life is *ever* gonna have what we do!

They got the drugs. They got the money and guns. But we got LIFE--real life, and all the heart and soul that comes with it if we don't give it up in a fit of despair.

And let's not forget that the basic purpose of art is pleasure. Pleasure for its makers and its users. The pleasure that comes from nourishing the spirit and enlightening the heart and mind. This is, by its very nature, opposed to the reduction of all human relations to the buying and selling of material THINGS! Art isn't all that gets mercilessly "commodified." *Everything* humans produce meets this sorry fate.

But people *have* always and *will* always resist oppression, and one of the most important ways we've sustained ourselves through the ages has been with song and dance, poetry and drama, painting and sculpture and, in modern times, photography and movies. This is one vitally important bond between all people, everywhere, because it's something that's unique to *humanity*, not just to any particular culture.

Nowadays, it's valuable to the leaders of the "free world" to *appear* to allow anybody to say whatever they want, (as in song lyrics, for example.) But on a street level they're dividing us all up by style, ethnicity, age, etc. We are, after all, living in a world where hundreds of millions of people have been uprooted by brute force or economic compulsion and thrown together to scratch and claw for a bigger share of the crumbs from the master's table.

But what's important is that in the midst of all

the competition and hate, people continue to be inspired by each other's artistic expression regardless of whether they're "supposed to" be or not. Nothing can stop people from experimenting with the sounds they hear, the shapes they see, the things they experience.

More and more, culture is cross-pollinating on a global scale. World music, for example, is a reality, not simply a marketing ploy. And this is going to continue in the face of nationalism, (which is a

marketing ploy,) racism, fundamentalism, whatever "ism," because it is a delight to explore and discover, and it is a basic aspiration of the "have-nots" on this planet to learn to live together.

There is much cynicism in the world today. As we rapidly approach the end of a century it seems that all the "Great Promises" have been broken. It's not surprising that many people, including artists, would fall prey to the dominant philosophy of "I'm getting mine, fuck everybody else." (Of course, anyone who's had direct contact with the star-making machinery knows what a cruel lie is at its core--even for those who "make it." ...Not that that lessens the appeal of fame and fortune!)

But as we're scrutinizing and analyzing, theorizing and philosophizing, let's remember that this is not a laboratory; it's a battle field. Things don't fall into neat categories or cozy definitions. And this applies to the whole world--not just AMERICA. At stake is the future of humanity and artists are the voices of its spirit and the guardians of its soul.

We must find the ways to enlighten and entertain, to be popular and dangerous, to be effective, though we may be, sometimes, "profitable" to them. We must, at the same time, be subversive and self-reliant. We must make *Komotion* and remain rooted underground, out of bounds and unrestrained by the limits of the dominant culture. Not only so that we can have something to fall back on when things go bad, but because we must learn how to "do it right" since we know *they* do it wrong.

We must produce art of our own, for our own, with our own and *against* their ways and means and make it sustain itself by the strength of its own community. A community of ideas, a community of ideals.

*by Mat Callahan*





## FALLING BEHIND

by Steven LaVoie

*In (Western) systems we have given priority to the irreversibility of time, production and history. Only that which refutes this all-too-beautiful order of the irreversibility of time, and the finality of things, can be fascinating.*

--Jean Baudrillard

In 20th century Western society, the avant-garde has functioned as the opposition to the prevailing standards of taste and culture, standards which have served the *status quo* as a barrier to change.

Lacking a better word, let's use the term "avant-garde" to include the manifold aspects of alternative culture--"The Underground" as it was once called--and not only experimental artists.

Now, as we end the century, it's clear: the avant-garde is in trouble. Its historic weapon, disruption of expectation and taste, has lost its impact as the mainstream speeds up its capability to co-opt rebellion. Artists and performers continue to expand the realm of creative activity, while attacking the materialism of our culture. Yet their work is doing little to counter the insidious powers of mass communication and mainstream taste. Instead, it has become raw material for mass consumption.

The reasons are obvious: new information is being assimilated at a faster and faster pace and new ideas are capitalized upon before they can become disruptive. "The new," in fact, is a commodity--quickly packaged for the mass market. In this sense, the avant-garde has succeeded in restructuring public notions of value. Establishment culture no longer resists "the new." Instead it has learned to incorporate the original into its ideological architecture, thus negating its power. An example was George Bush, who expropriated the "voodoo economics" of the New Right, a radical, if regressive, philosophy, and the "Earth First!" doctrine of the radical environmentalists, into the rhetoric of his winning presidential campaign.

Other new ideas are simply ignored, others rejected as narcissistic, self-indulgent, nerve-wracking, or obscene and thus are squelched by the cultural mechanism of values. Creative acts are dismantled quickly by the whimsy of taste, by the fickle nature of the purveyors of manner, and even by the audience the avant-garde has so carefully nourished. The passing interest in Laurie Anderson is an example which comes immediately to mind.

The avant-garde has begun to resemble the culture it rebels against. It has become a vehicle for the continuity of the *status quo*, which has come to rely on the avant-garde as a gauge of what is to come in order to prepare marketing strategies and new products, to define the political issues and develop defenses against threats to bourgeois ideology.

Just as mainstream culture has made a mockery of "the new" by appropriating it for consumption, the avant-garde is mocking its earlier counterparts, (Marcel Duchamp, Tristan Tzara, Kurt Schwitters, Vladimir Malevich, El Lissitzky, Man Ray, and Guillaume Apollinaire, most notably.) It has failed to recognize that it has accomplished the goals set by its exalted founders. The future imagined by them seventy-five years ago is here.

We recognize the aesthetics of a bathroom fixture--as Duchamp had--and now we have even more beautiful toilets. We live the *orgone*--as Wilhelm Reich suggested--and the reward is Dr. Ruth.

It's hard to imagine during the Reagan Era, but Reagan himself was a manifestation of the Dada vision. Like art, politics has become a parody of itself. The struggles in the streets have become parodies of revolution and Reagan is the final caricature of the politician in a democracy.

So now we go beyond the mere understanding. The overthrow of Western civilization is next; it has shown itself for what it is: a failed, comic, forced order totally cut off from nature and truth. Its destiny is

collapse.

The issues today reach beyond those faced by early 20th century Bohemians: beyond class struggle, beyond the scope of the intentions of an earlier avant-garde. It is not possible to overwhelm Western civilization by employing its own values and tastes. We need to start defining a new world view and values for a counterculture which will not assume the irreversibility of time, as Baudrillard said, instead of merely mocking the present condition of our culture and its manners.

The Western view sees time and progress as complementary--that as we move into the future, man perfects himself. This assumes that progress is inherently good, that the primitive is by nature inferior to the future. The avant-garde assumes this reality. Therefore, despite its best efforts, the avant-garde as it was formulated early in this century will naturally condescend to cultures which embrace another concept of time... where the past and present and future coexist, or where time cycles through an eternal, organic order of history!

The Western view is flawed. We can see that as we move into the future, society comes apart. Rather than approaching a more ideal state, it flounders. The avant-garde flounders with it, clinging to an antiquated notion of what is challenging and radical as conceived by the early 20th century European experimenters.

The avant-garde needs to bail out altogether and start reconstructing its aesthetics, based on natural order--which scientists are discovering is not order at all--but entropy.

The entropic state allows change to control existence. The present state has institutionalized change, defined progress in terms of demographic and technical expansion. Meanwhile, society splinters, in a much different model, into a collection of smaller institutions. The avant-garde is just another institution with its own institutionalized mechanisms for stasis. And its audience is an institution made up entirely of the avant-garde itself. I'll use the example of the poets, whose audience is small, consisting almost entirely of other poets.

In order to sustain themselves, poets begin to produce work which is all alike and to consume one another's work, in order to simulate the common aesthetic, (which, these days, is likely a simulation of an avant-garde style of the past.) A closed system is created: an institution.

Thus "standards" develop, which mock the conventions of the *status quo*--or replace them, as you will. The impact, the validity and quality of the work are no longer valid questions. Work is judged solely on its relationship to its audience--its "likeness" to the common standard. So, the much-debated problem of audience is moot, since there is no difference between the artist and the audience.

This audience might grow, just as the numbers of people who participate in the arts and who call themselves artists have grown immensely since World War II. Artists have become a demographic force in some areas, such as Emeryville, fueling the redevelopment of blighted areas--creating their own self-perpetuating economy.

Artists have to come to terms with the fact that they are a community and behave like a community and have become isolated from the rest of society. And they must realize they have lost contact with cultures

and subcultures unlike their own. They have stopped "attending" anything except what matches the standards of the audience to which they belong, thus continuing to subscribe to the faulty Western phenomenological view.

Under the current set of circumstances, the work the avant-garde does will continue to undermine Western civilization, but without the impact needed to overthrow it. The work needs to be directed towards a larger end.

How?

Join people who are doing things we don't do ourselves, in ways we find unfamiliar, from cultures not our own. In this way, alternative experience is brought to the audience --the creative subculture to which we belong.

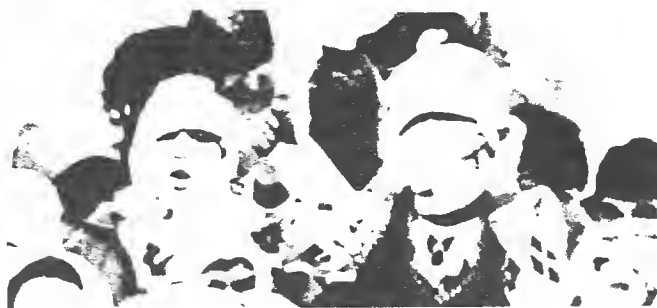
Our culture feeds on the avant-garde like flies on a plate of shit, causing the avant-garde to become more and more "outside" and its genuine work to be more and more remote from the masses. So you take away the plate and refill it with discoveries, visions and plans--energy directed towards the creativity of spirit as it is shared by the species--stuff that won't nourish the mainstream.

And the mainstream starves. The media, rather than the artists, begins to close down, lacking sustenance.

To participate in this process, we must be willing to reverse time, to delight in the body, in health, the

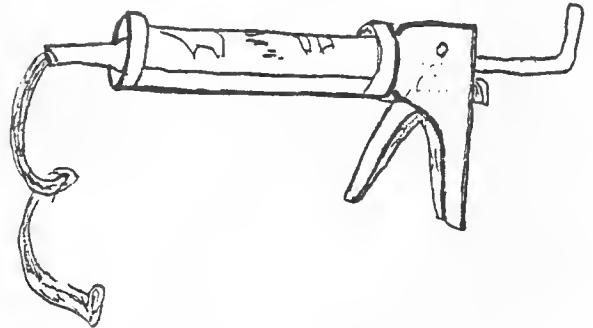
***"...The overthrow of Western civilization is next; it has shown itself for what it is: a failed, comic, forced order totally cut off from nature and truth."***

unknown, different races, languages and cultures, the absence of routine, of expectation, of "standards"--and be seduced by it all. We must be willing to redefine the avant-garde as an exploration of man's diversity and his possibilities for intimacy, rather than as a purveyor of trends. Objects will lose their appeal, while communication becomes essential. The raw material of creative work and of social change becomes the same, and the object is the same, as well, consisting entirely of sensations, information, feelings and thoughts... anthropological data--all of a substance which is useless to the mainstream economy, Materialism, without new commodities will starve; time will have turned around: *Then, for the next phase of subversion...*

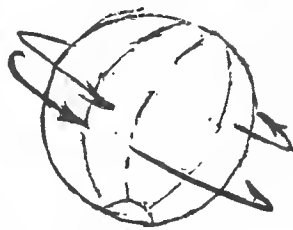




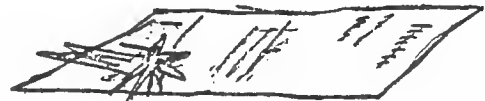
GRACIAS ACOLYTE,  
BUT NOT RIGHT NOW.  
I'M WIRED UP ENOUGH  
ON THIS DEADLINE...



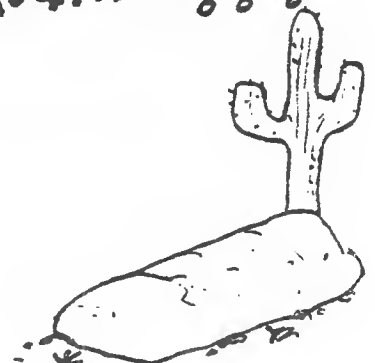
OH! SO NOW ITS...  
LIKE...  
I FUCK THE REVOLUTION!

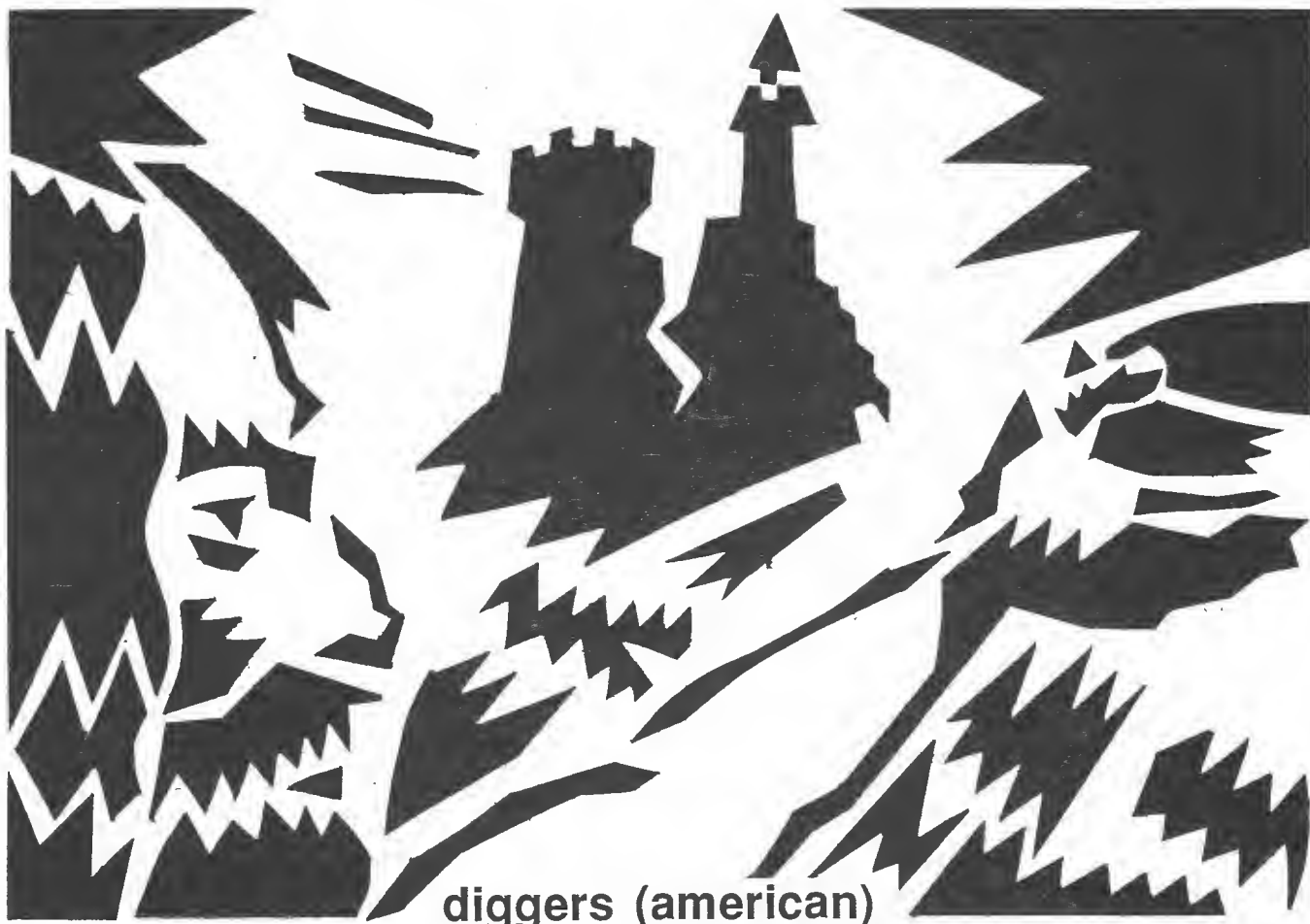


YOU DON'T UNDER-  
STAND - MAN. I'M  
UNDER CONTRACT...



YAH?...  
AND HERE I THOUGHT  
YOU WERE UNDER-  
GROUND ???





## diggers (american)

*'no other matter herein, but to observe the law of righteous action, endeavoring to shut out of the creation, the cursed thing, called particular property, which is the cause of all wars, bloodshed, crime, and enslaving laws, that hold people under miserie.'*

thus said, the diggers of sixteen forty nine appropriated the common parkland around saint george's hill in surrey, england for purposes of cultivation, to feed themselves in protest of inflated prices.

three centuries later, in september of nineteen sixty six, a sixteen year old black youth was shot and killed by a white police officer in san francisco. the murder precipitated a city wide disturbance that required the appearance of national guard units bearing firearms with live ammunition.

the daily poverty and homelessness, coupled to real estate speculation, and resulting in the destruction of neighborhood enclaves, this made the military presence intolerable. the response from residents of the city's haight-ashbury district was swift. a group of actors from the san francisco mime troupe decided to engage in a more subversive mode of street theatre than the mime troupe, whose main form was commedia dell' arte. they chose to call themselves the diggers.

at four o'clock every day in the panhandle section of golden gate park, the diggers began to feed the homeless and hungry. leaflets were handed

out on haight street, the riot torn fillmore and elsewhere: 'free food everyday free food--it's free because it's yours!'

the diggers built a thirteen foot square wooden 'frame of reference' and painted it gold. the frame became the free food theatre stage--anyone who was hungry could walk through the square and eat digger stew and soup.

for two years, the diggers fed the indigent and the hordes of disaffected white youth who descended upon san francisco from america's suburbs. from all points on the map, a generation heard the news on television and traveled to san francisco.

the diggers opened 'free stores' and gave away all the consumer goods that were available from america's post war surplus. the struggle to obtain washing machines for working women who needed them, to feeding the homeless, and to provide heroin addicts with their own methadone, the diggers' psychedelic social work was a utopian tendency born in the shifting antagonisms of the american economy. the diggers said: "our conflict begins with salaries and prices. the trip has been paid for at an incredible price in death, slavery and psychosis....give up jobs. be with people. defend *against* property...."

the credo 'it's free because it's yours' was construed from a populist notion rooted in militant activity. the diggers formed a voluntary association that demanded collective social consciousness and community action. whether it was stealing meat from





Chuck Sperry

butchers or obtaining donations of vegetables, the diggers sought to circulate material wealth without mediation. drugs, clothes, information and medical care, the best quality consumer goods america could offer its dispossessed, this is what the diggers demanded.... 'this is a theatre of the underground that wants out....its plays are glass cutters for empire windows....'

the diggers became famous. anonymity became the weapon in thwarting unwanted recognition. journalists flocked to san francisco, seeking to document the first prefabricated youth rebellion of the twentieth century. clandestine activity and limited resources required discretion. the diggers put the word out on haight street: 'anonymity is more important than exposing the hype going down....' and their refutation of authorship by deed became complete when they burned an amount of money donated to them.

'....how many tv specials would it take to establish one guatemalan revolution? how many weeks would an ad agency require to facelift the viet cong? slowly, very slowly, we are led nowhere....'

in early nineteen sixty eight, the diggers produced an distributed forty thousand free copies of the 'digger papers.' the magazine was a compilation of their two year odyssey into the realm of free exchange. it was a how-to-do-it journal for the construction of an autonomous city. the cover of the work revealed a

black and white image of two chinese tong gang assassins leaning against a brick wall. above their heads is a sign that spells out the i ching character for revolution, and below their feet was written the enigmatic slogan that spoke to the heart of the diggers theatre: 'one per cent free.'

like most utopian tendencies, the diggers' life span was short. the cause of their demise is historical: between the axis of personal exhaustion and police intervention, the 'frame of reference' became unrecognizable. the days of free exchange in the haight ashbury were over.

san francisco has a way of recuperating rebellion. that is to say, it's able to dislocate authentic subversion: our wildest dreams have found themselves for sale in the market place. if this city is a modern parable for greed and hunger, then haight street is its other name.

but i know the flux of history, and it is my turn to play. the moment when my grandfather told me about the diggers and the amazement i could not hide, the idea of a life without price tags or shopping centers, its probably why you will receive this book for free.

--From peter plate's latest book, **black wheel of anger**.

(Available at Bound Together Books, and ATA in San Francisco.)

A seventy-year-old Filipino man is on stage spryly playing guitar and singing "Five-Foot-Two, Eyes of Blue," when all of a sudden it strikes me: this is fucking great! All those hours of mopping the floor, too many phone calls, and all the grunge work seem worth it -- 'cause this is Komotion at its best! It wasn't his particular rendition of the song that was so inspiring, but the overall experience was something special, and I felt proud that we were hosting this benefit for **GABRIELA**, a progressive Filipino women's organization. There weren't many people there, since this was not one of our trendier events, but the stories and poems presented were deeply moving and filled with personal anecdotes of life, love and struggles, including the infamous I-Hotel evictions. **Maria Tan** (almost seventy) read a beautiful poem, and it didn't seem to matter that I couldn't understand a word of the Tagalog. All of the performers had a tremendously youthful spirit, and isn't that what it's really about? Drop the posing and let's get down with real life! This was one of my favorite "Cafés" of the year. Now there's another six months of great shows to get into!

Last summer we presented a "Sexual Politics Night" featuring a live performance by the female rap group, the Yeastie Girlz and **Caitlin Manning's** video, *Stripped Bare*, about strippers and the sex industry. Manning's video examines the lives of several strippers and allows them to discuss their own views on pornography and their work. Although Manning avoids making a final statement on such a complex subject, a unique perspective emerges that perhaps women are not exploited in the sex industry any more than women are exploited in other work environments. Despite a number of the strippers having backgrounds as the victims of sexual abuse, this is not true for all, and many of them have a fairly positive attitude towards stripping as a job choice--considering that many women have really lousy opportunities to begin with. There is also a growing trend towards women themselves owning adult entertainment companies. The video will probably not be shown on public television due to some explicit scenes, but has been shown to packed houses in San Francisco and is being distributed nationally.

**The Yeastie Girlz** were a shift of perspective with their aggressive, rude-girl feminism. It's great to hear rap that speaks to female concerns and genitalia, as in hits like "Yeast Power," "Bitch Twitch," and "Get your hands off (my body,)" which is on the *Komotion*



John Trudell

*International* record. It's great stuff, whether you know how to use a speculum or not!

On June 15, Komotion presented Café Morocco with the film *Saints and Spirits*, and live music by **El Fayzeen**. The film followed three religious events in different regions of Morocco. Sweet mint tea and bendir drums closed a beautiful evening.

A rare evening of Native American art and culture featured **John Trudell**, poet and recording artist, on June 25th. Trudell's spoken song pieces addressed not only Native American issues, but the universal issues of love, pain, survival, and courage. He gripped the audience with a spontaneous commentary on the barbarity towards human life and nature that characterizes our "civilized" society. Some of Trudell's more recent work can be found on *Graffiti Man*, a combination of poetry and music in which he collaborated with his close friend, musician **Jesse Ed Davis**. Ironically, and tragically, John's appearance at Komotion came the day following the news of Jesse's untimely death in Los Angeles.

Modern Native American art and sculpture filled the Komotion gallery during this event. Beautiful, abstract antelope heads made of shiny golden metal stood four feet high, while portraits of elderly tribeswomen peered mournfully from the walls. Several pieces in the show were by artist

**Celeste Connor**, whose magnificent wall hangings incorporate a range of materials including animal skins, beads, keys, paint, and shattered mirrors, each of which are essential in unfolding the significance of the tales she is weaving. Her most stunning work offers a Native American perspective on the American flag as a screaming skull emerges from a single star, blood dripping from the stripes. One of Celeste's colorful and mythic dancers appears on the cover of *Komotion International* and reproductions of her work can be found in the 1988 *Komotion Magazine Compilation*, both of which are available at Komotion, Aquarius Records in Noe Valley, and Subway Guitars in the East Bay.

Komotion would like to thank the other Native American performers, as well as **Mystic Youth**, **Congo Phil**, **Attaboy** (an exceptional band!) **Upside Downside**, **Don Paul**, **Contraband**, and **Jonathan E** who all made June a blast!

Our anti-Fourth of July celebration included *Anarchism in America*--which gets its title 'cause two neo-hippies pack their cameras in a motor home and travel around the American heartland "In Search Of..." anarchism. Although the film does contain some humorous "man on the street"-type scenes, and some rare historical footage of Emma Goldman, it sometimes confuses



Celeste Connor

libertarianism with anarchism--a barfy mistake. After the film, **Vivisection** revealed themselves--in more ways than one--as they hosted a nude talk show on anarchy. Then, **Dave Lippman**, a.k.a. George Shrub, performed his hilarious folk guitar renditions of our beloved politicians. My favorite was Ollie North singing *Thank God I'm a Contra Boy*. This event was also made possible, in part, by (no fuckin' Mobil Corp grant, that's for sure!) **Stickdog**, **Sonic Brain Jam**, and **D.J. Amazing Grace**.



The **Anti-Apathy All Acoustic Alternative**, better known as the "Five 'A' Club," brought their acoustic cabaret to Komotion on July 13. I particularly enjoyed David Brian's songs and the headliners, **Terminators of Endearment**, an odd-ball duo whose songs virtually impale American icons. Also bringing their own wit and wisdom to the show was poet **Richard L.** and singer/songwriter **M.C. Daly**.

Crammed with talent and overbooked, "Out Nite Out!" was our July evening of unique and unusual performance. Deep grooves were cut into the public's awareness (and eardrums) by **Terra Incognita** and the **Wrestling Worms**. Terra



**Incognita** played a rich juju/swamp mix of two basses, talking drums and vocals. The **Worms** funkied into sax territory in a big-band way, with arrangements direct from Herb Alpert's last peyote trip on the Dating Game. A short set by saxophonist **Robert Haven** had the audience transfixed. Comedy was provided by **Scream on Pitch** and poetry by **Tony Vaughan**. **Kyle Z.** did a monologue on phone-sex and showed a video of herself interviewing one of her clients.

The "Shanti Benefit" in July was played by **Harm Farm**, **HET** (pronounced "nyet,") and **Consolidated**, who launched a "1984"-inspired attack on the media.

August brought the film *The International Sweethearts of Rhythm*, the story of a multi-racial band of female jazz musicians who toured the South in the 40's. An all-female band called **Ed** played some adventurous dance music. **Kamala and the Karnivors** took on a wilder rockabilly flavor in the final set. We thank DJ **Veronica Live** and poet **Michele C.** for adding spice to the event.

On August 20, we held a benefit for the **Christic Institute**, a public interest law firm investigating the "Secret Team" and the history of U.S. "drugs for guns" deals that date back to the Vietnam War and the invasion of Cambodia. Proving that the White House is the "Crack House," their video presents incontrovertible evidence of CIA drug running to finance covert wars and operations. The speakers also revealed the nature of REX-84, the "Readiness Exercise" that allows the president to skirt around the Posse Comitatus Act by declaring a sort of "pre-National Emergency" test of "readiness," during which it is imperative to arm "civilian" military personnel with "hundreds of tons of small arms and ammunition" for "domestic law enforcement purposes." A whole system of detention camps and National Guard maneuvers has been planned to "round up" the appropriate type of illegal alien and protester. (This type of activity has already been adopted in about twenty states, I believe.) Just remember folks, "1984" was five years ago.... (For a more detailed account of the facts, check out Daniel Sheehan's Affidavit filed in December of '86--Who needs sleazy intrigue novels when the truth itself sounds like one?!) Many thanks to **Operation Ivy**, the **Bedlam Rovers** and **Steel Pole Bathtub** for the sound waves of protest to this shit.

Modeled somewhat after European and Canadian anarchist and neo-pagan gatherings, the Rad Cult Festival was a city-wide event in early September that included actions, a black market bazaar, and performances in several spaces and lofts. Komotion's night in the festival was an inspired party that went on after 3:00 a.m. It began with rare and riotous rock clips that only our "film guy," **Craig Baldwin**, could put together. The feature film, *Rock the Kremlin*, provided an unusual look at rock musicians and alienated youth, but with a Soviet twist. I was particularly struck by one scene in which this musician kept saying, "We're free to say anything we want," yet somehow he was shrieking the opposite. **The Theatre of Changes** followed, which included individual and group collaborations. An improvisation with two speakers/vocalists, musicians and slides was particularly good. The performers included people from **Elbows Akimbo**, **Contraband**, and **Theatre Action Group**. After about three hours of performances, our funkiest D.J., **The Uhuru Maggot**, let loose and definitely gave our joints a work out. More performances followed



## IMPORTANCE (from a book of shadows)

by Claude Palmer

I hear cries and whistles in the streets. Above the fast food joint, the beats of dancers' feet and Congoleros' slaps mix into the huge electronic drumbeats of the car stereos. I leave the photo shop oozing chemical mist, discarded prints of lions and babies in my shirt. I have letters at home, unanswered. One works six days a week; another moved to Brooklyn; another walks the streets of Dearborn, looking for her rebellious brothers and sisters.

It's been days without any contact or human interaction. I hear the footsteps of the guard. I welcome him. I am here like the rest of you, alone. We are individuals; to gather together or agree is a dangerous concept. In separation the system functions smoothly, with some working while others remain completely useless.

They hunted down Osceola, the Seminole leader, in the swamps of Florida and Georgia. He was betrayed and his voice was silenced. Now we continue to de-stabilize many nations. The olive-drab chic is the color and fashion of our deception. No more guajiras in my neighborhood. Give them all rap as they adapt to being North Americans. Pump Peruvian rock into the ghettos and Columbia into their brains. Jail the aliens now. They will work in jail, making cassettes so I can groove to the guajiras you abandoned with your legless children in Usulután, in Leon, in Chichicastenango and in Santiago in the Moncada when Allende spoke on the radio and drank his last drink with a rifle. Cross the Mexican border in the trunk of a car, breathing exhaust for hours. The coyote has gone back for fresh victims. My child, Daddy will return to get us and take us with him.

It's Hiroshima Day at the nosecone factory. Bound women, blindfolded, with clothespins on their nipples. Chained men with rubber balls in their mouths. The age of rubber and metal. "It fits over you slowly 'til you die..."

The Big Game is coming. It's time for Spring Training. Save your money, your energy, your seed. Pep rallies for heroes on trial, those who acted on their own and smile when apprehended. The closet queen chief executive has secrets that good P.R. will have to protect. Fingerprints left in hot airport lounges, phone calls made by frantic Cuban mercenaries entrusted with too much responsibility. His blue-eyed sidekick, the young vacant man, second in command, is hoping the kid he scored from in College is permanently tucked away in some heavy security prison where his story can't be told.

New strings, new brushes, clean paint, fresh paper. Let us violate the Law, one law at a time. Let us find the Real Laws, the Real Order, the Real Picture.

The Kuomintang: Heroin flowing out in planes in military baggage en route to my brain where I feel whole. A wood floor, six dancers. Historical eras choreographed into a forty-five minute performance. The Channel 7 News Team on location in Lower East Side shooting gallery researching AIDS. A fat white man with microphone tells junkie "I can't believe you're doing this..." The virus is coming. The virus I touched in Baltimore in 1973. The virus dropped from a boat into the S.F. Bay. The vertigo-producing light bulbs installed in New York subway stations with cameras recording the effects at rush hour. Infect, experiment, record.

He casts his body in plaster. Wraps hundreds of layers of gauze dyed nine colors around intricately detailed lines of hand, knee, scrotum. Mobiles of found objects and glass. Clear sculptures glow in the dusk while her eyes turn odd colors from a raw vegetable diet. In the echoing streets below, black firepower weaves around the sleeping bag-people. Black youth are armed, with telephones and supply lines. Loyal messengers under twenty-one working both sides of the Law with no wires to plug in. The Old Left seldom got as close to the organization or weapons or dope as Big Business. The SLA went down in fire, but these brothers are already ahead of the Game: "The Man runs dope--We run dope. They got guns--we get bigger guns. They got radios--We got a language."

White Rock Star comes to Puerto Rico to make a record. He pays triple scale and gives everybody a ride home. His name is there under each song; he took that music home and put words on it; English words. In a year you can buy the cassette and hear the parts you played, underneath his voice.

As the jungles catch fire during the opening of *Apocalypse Now!* I realize that people were running, burning, dying, fighting and hating us. To the "Shadow" Government, we, the People are always potential domestic Viet Cong: sub-human. It is important to "access" us; the media was advised by John Foster Dulles to "Spin a story clearer than truth..."



In Hamburg, the back door of a military meatwagon flies open, dumping fresh body bags from Southeast Asia on the streets. The stoned privates hurriedly load the black, brown, and pink bodies of Americans back into the vehicle. White dust scatters on the wet streets smelling vaguely of milk and earth. Back in America the TV crews fan out to cover the top stories. Little children kidnapped. Oil spills, toxic dumps. Gay businessmen abducted, robbed and strangled in the forest above the hills of a suburban town. Sheepish boys admit the crime, but show no sorrow in court. Self-defense is a great American offensive. They are going to kill us in the streets. They are going to get us at home. Play your guitar. Smoke weed and listen to Black Uhuru. Chicanos can get jobs, money and education in the U.S. Army. Come on down, forget about those other wars. Return home and you are burned, go hide, go down to the corner of Army and Valencia with the aliens, your brothers.

Argentine voices say, "In my country, there are the murdered, the imprisoned, the terrorized and the exiled..." "Will the last one to leave please turn out the lights."

In the nameless desert, Coyote is creeping back to our world, head close to the ground, necklaces of eyeballs cast aside. With lips drawn apart in a strange smile and teeth bared, Coyote smells the scents of danger and fresh kill. Coyote is needed. Blood-Clot Boy: the Indian tale about a savior where the people are trapped in the guts of the great sucking fish. He dances with a white flint blade tied to his head. Jumping higher and higher, he finally severs the heart of the monster and frees the People. But the Messiah isn't coming.

"You painted our windows shut" says a sign in the window of the renovated Victorian flat. The Greek Secret Police said "We just have black hearts..." There is no miracle but the truth told in cries and secret hand signals. The truth in questions and songs and the work of those who have made the bridge between the pain and the strength. Night is here. The zigzag path of poison men is the wrong path. Turn to the Earth, the stars, but not with weapons. Yet still we must attack. I've heard all power comes from the barrel of the gun. Power comes from listening, from seeing. "My UZI weighs a ton..." I hear on a radio dying from battery overload. All power comes from the sex of a woman.

Ask questions. You know what is true. Every experience has given you something to teach. Make a sound that is very full, from deep enough inside, where the river goes back a million light-miles, to no beginning.



"Rue St. Denis"

Ana Becker



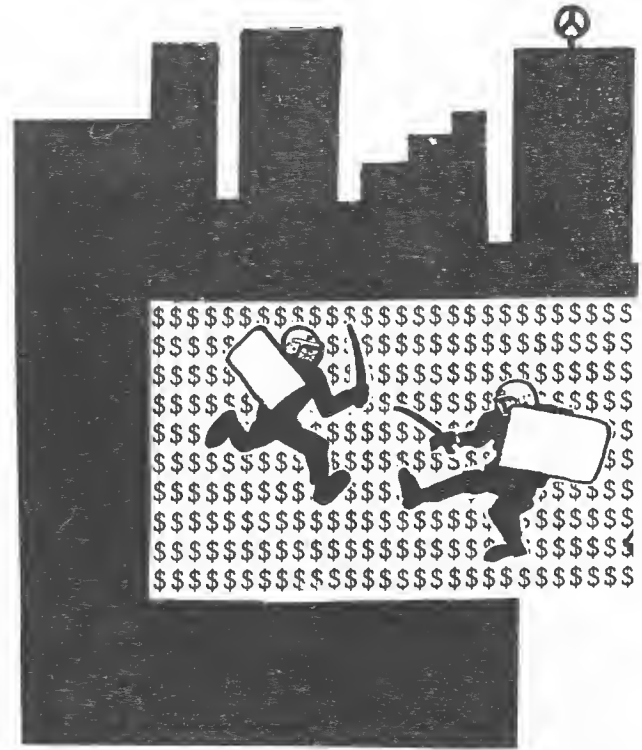
# Meeting of Murderers

by Mary Liz Thomson

Command control was high above in a helicopter, orchestrating the movement of troops that would wall off different streets or head towards burning dumpsters and shattered windows. 6,000 police, trained in riot tactics, were brought in from West Germany. With 4,000 of Berlin's own, they still couldn't maintain total control over the people they call "the chaotic ones." They did however manage to arrest over 1,000 people, beat up hundreds, and block off many spontaneous demonstrations. Meanwhile, the top finance ministers of 150 different countries and over 10,000 world bankers were sitting down to divvy up the world's resources at the annual International Monetary Fund/World Bank meeting.

As the night grew darker, it got more chaotic. It would begin in the commercial center of the city with musicians drumming in front of the shell of an old cathedral which was surrounded by a modern cement park and a water sculpture. The music was banned, but still every night they came out to start the rhythm. A crowd of people and police would slowly grow until thousands were gathered in anxious anticipation.

The police came with their shields and clubs and *Darth Vader* helmets. With all their padding and freshly scrubbed faces, they looked like the Aryan race army Hitler dreamed of. Only there were women too. Together, in their lines, they formed impressive blocks, ready in an instant to attack with the speed of their martial arts training. But first, they moved slow, walls of them walking up the side streets until they had encircled all the demonstrators. Sometimes they would charge one section, striking with their clubs or karate kicks. Then they began arresting whole groups of people. Every night there were major confrontations like this.



**IWF WELTBANK-KONGRESS  
WESTBERLIN SEPT' 88 ANGREIFEN!**

I went to Berlin in September to make a video about the Autonomous movement and one of their biggest projects: a week of daily actions during the IMF's annual meeting which was held there. The Autonomen managed to disrupt the commercial and high cultural center of the city through the whole course of the bankers meetings. Around 100 bank and store windows were broken. Some bankers' cars

were stolen or smashed. The Red Army Faction (RAF) had tried to assassinate the German finance minister the previous week. By the last day, the bankers were being told not to return to their hotels and that their things would be sent to them.

The Autonomen is a radical European-wide movement born of the militant resistance of the squatters, the anti-nuclear, women's and lesbian, and solidarity movements. While there is some continuity with the new left movements of the 60's, and even the anti-Nazi resistance, this powerful movement is creating it's own modern synthesis of theory. They oppose the structures and values of capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy, (a symbol of the strength of the women's movement,) and work in a non-



hierarchical way to create a revolutionary world set apart from money and bankers and authority. In contrast to the Greens, this is an extra-parliamentary movement which uses both legal and illegal tactics. Here, the personal is also political. A huge focus of energy is spent on developing their own community structures for alternative collective housing, jobs, and spaces for cultural events and meetings.

While there are people all over Berlin involved in Autonomi-types of activities, the largest community is in one of the poorest areas, Kreuzberg. This is a Turkish barrio blended with the formerly-squatted houses of radicals who sport black leather jackets and colored hair. About five years ago there were almost 200 squatted buildings, each housing 10-75 people. The government reacted to diffuse this resistance scene by legalizing the houses, giving the squatters contracts, low rent, and even money to fix the buildings up. Many people were opposed to signing the contracts, but their means of survival became dependent on this cooperation with "the system." The result was a split in the scene: those who *did* sign often became de-radicalized.

Walking through Kreuzberg feels almost like being in a semi-liberated zone. The tall, brick buildings that house a variety of collective projects are covered with graffiti: *US Troops Back to Fort Bragg; Murderers, Fascists--German Politicians*; squatters symbols and circle-'A's; murals of masked protestors with

Palestinian scarves. Look up and see banners hanging everywhere from high windows: *The IMF, Murderers Meeting*. Out of another window, different political slides are projected each night against a huge blank wall across the street. Here there is a creative resistance.

The Greens, and their coalition with Berlin's leftist community groups--the Alternative List--planned an alternative congress the week before the IMF meeting in order to make their own recommendations. They also planned a mass demonstration on Sunday calling for a cancelation of the debt to the so-called "third world." 100,000 people turned out for the mostly festive demonstration of creative floats, street theater and music. Except at the front where the masked Autonomi lead the way in the only part of the demonstration that was fully surrounded by police.

The Autonomous movement rejects the recommendation for an alternative banking system for the IMF. They don't think a system that gives 87% of the world's resources to the most developed nations is capable of being reformed. In response to the IMF/World Bank meeting, they planned four days of demonstrations, each with a different theme. The focus was on local offices of multinational corporations, arms manufacturers, development institutions, and perpetrators of patriarchy. Every day there were women's actions, such as rallies at the women's prison and sex "tourism" clubs. These day-time



demonstrations had anywhere from a few hundred to 1,000 people, and there were always more going on than you could make it to. These demos served to clarify and focus the Autonomen's politics beyond their militant image. On the last day 10,000 people, and as many police, turned out for a tense demonstration of the Autonomen Revolutionary Bloc.

Hundreds of people were involved in the structural support work done for the week. They had a daily newspaper, the *Zahltag*, or *Payday*, exposing the fallacies in the IMF's analysis of poverty and the World Bank's role in the lives of the millions who suffer. Twelve information centers were set up in cafés, bars, and "people's kitchens." They provided constant updates of what was happening in the streets: the numbers of arrested, the direction spontaneous demonstrations were taking, such as: "500 people are headed for the Opera Plaza with the police in hot pursuit." This news was provided by runners immediately carrying messages back and forth.

Almost two years of meetings and discussions were involved in the planning of activities around the IMF meeting. Hundreds of people that work on different issues came together for large meetings, then split up into smaller groups and committees. Calls went out to other cities in Europe to organize their own simultaneous demonstrations, and many people from Denmark, Holland, Italy, Euskadia, England, and the U.S. joined the Berliners for the week of demos. The actual planning of the specific actions didn't happen until four months before the IMF meeting and only after many lengthy discussions on the nature of the world economy, the development of the movement, sexism, and a split by many women to form their own group outside the mixed sex one.

The Autonomen, as a radical component, was not as present in the night-time demos. Some people felt these spontaneous situations could have been escalated further with more of their involvement. Part of the explanation given for why this didn't happen was that so many people were working on the support structures. Another reason had to do with paranoia, repressive measures, and the Autonomen's many past experiences of street fighting with police.

In the weeks before the demos began, organizers were being arrested and houses raided. Under a security law they can hold people for 48 hours without cause. A lot of people are still in jail for throwing rocks (a two year sentence,) or being involved with other demos over the last few years. One guy described to me how the Berlin police gave a tour to the West German police of all the political houses. They were standing in front of his building, pointing them out. The building I stayed in, and countless others, were nearly empty during the week--the fear of raids driving hundreds out of Kreuzberg, leaving behind perhaps only a watchperson.

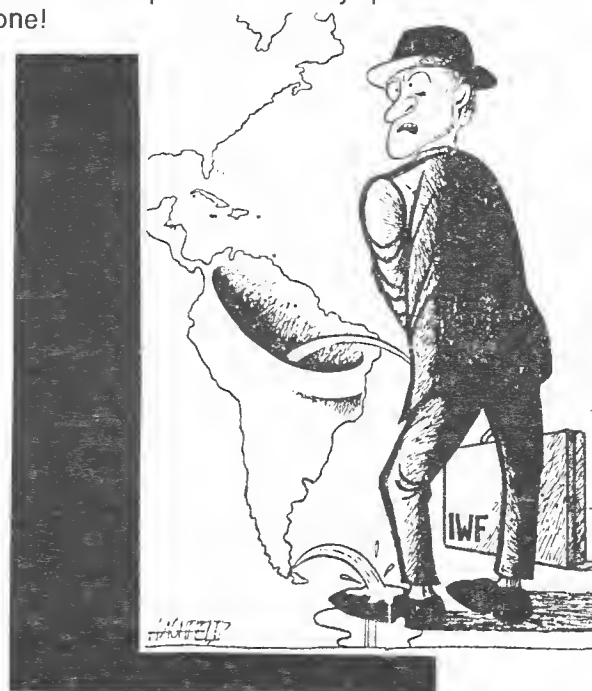
On May 1, 1987, the police attacked a traditional street fair with tear gas. A huge riot erupted in Kreuzberg and the police retreated. Thousands of people were looting stores--even older Turkish mothers and kids. A big grocery store was burnt to the ground, and the whole area became a totally out-of-control-free-zone for a night. With experiences like this, the Berlin police prepare for the worst. In the past they have sealed off all of Kreuzberg, even closing the subway exits and entrances.

The Autonomen expected more repression in the area of Kreuzberg than there actually was this time. While the police searched people at all the subways and points leading in to the demos--looking for scarves, masks, and padding (which are illegal)--it was still possible to move in and out of Kreuzberg to the downtown center, where most of the action was. In the end, the Autonomen came across as being perhaps a bit more reasonable in the eyes of the general public, compared to the excessive police brutality witnessed by everyone in the center of the city.

Almost every country in Europe has an imperialist colonial history, and the amount of wealth and refugees this has continuously brought them is evident everywhere. Germany is one of the richest countries in the world, with a higher average income and living standard than in the States. The commercialism, the useless garbage that is consumed, or barely even used before disposal can no longer be concealed. Nor can the disgusting over-abundance of material possessions--disgusting, compared to the way the majority of the world lives so that so few can have so much--disgusting, the way the majority of the world is tortured, kept in starvation, or numbed by the threat of nuclear weapons in order to maintain the stability of this unbalanced scenario.

How do we escape this form of captivity? How do we effect it? For the Autonomen, this struggle is not just fighting in behalf of the poor in the so-called "third world," but along with them in their own industrialized countries. The struggle is an international one, as are the structures of power and the Autonomen hope that the people of Europe and the United States will join them in radical dissent.

Don't accept it. Don't stay quiet. We are never alone!



## AFTER A CONVERSATION WITH PENNIE

This picture, with centuries-ago-abandoned dwellings  
along the cliffs behind infers  
the connectedness of time.

It's an obvious conclusion which is its significance.  
These are things which original minds come to independently:  
how all species coincide to life.  
Amidst geology. That unity.  
And saves it from triviality.

A string of beads of one color, of local stones, always  
fashionable everywhere.

Even in Japan, where jewelry is not coveted.  
The tribes of Papua.

Thus walls of discourse which condone  
small worlds in the West--thoughts from Milano,  
Vienna, Paris and a few blocks of New York City--  
are artificial in their disconnectedness.  
The bigness is left out, seething,  
its energy defended feverishly.

The worm that feeds the chicken that goes into the *mole*.

Models surround us, our synthetic music,  
New Orleans, Havana, Río de Janeiro, Kinshasa.  
The result is dancing.

Newness is simply an aspect.  
There is tonality, dissonance, rhythm, irrhythm,  
song.

You might suspect something is up,  
admiring those who have contributed in revolutionary ways.

Something comes together, a language  
with European roots, which addresses universal code,  
the complexity of drums, pagoda-shaped, forming laughter  
in the Far North, a world away.

The dwellings are virtually intact, an engineering which  
is not unlike today's,  
for human life, the goats, and corn,  
cooking, sleeping and having sex.

The post cards you can buy at the park store  
display this, even to the friends back home.

--Steven LaVoie



Celeste Connor

Like a mountain shaped by thousands of years of volcanic eruption, erosion and climate, our society exists today as the product of history. And like the evolution of a mountain, at any one moment, it's difficult to see that society is constantly changing, that empires come and go, as do ideas, traditions and social mores. In fact, how we view history, how we view ourselves, what we think, value and accept as "the way things are," is limited to this time and this place. There are no absolutes.

Yet, as human beings living in one particular time and place, our lives are inextricably bound up with the present society's traditions and values. How people live their lives, what they desire, and what makes them happy is all a product of this age.

And how would we characterize our present world? We value fame and the accumulation of wealth, while all meaning has been removed from the actual work itself; our mechanistic and isolated view of the world allows us to plunder nature; we are alienated from the body and each other; we value men over women, white over black, and on and on... In high school English class we learned that there are really only three themes in "all" literature--Man Against Nature, Man Against Society, and Man Against Himself. This view seems to sum up Western Civilization--dualistic, patriarchal and estranged.

This is the world we have entered. From birth, and bodies are sculpted from this set of hierarchical relationships and from consumer culture. No matter how self-righteously opposed to this value system we may be, it would be simplistic and foolish to say one can reject it outright. We can't reject what we are, we can only dedicate ourselves to a life-long struggle for another way: to developing a profound respect for other people and living things, to empowering others--not exploiting them, and to experiencing personal satisfaction from an internal source--not from the accumulation of material things and the other "rewards" society gives the obedient.

# POWER

But even if we believe in an alternative value system, a particular and profound problem arises. While we perceive and fight for a new way of relating to each other and the world, our bodies/our "selves" still contain the neurosis, ego and values that we've grown up with. This is an important reason for the failure of revolutions in this century. A change in the system alone is not sufficient to change those who compose the society. Soon after the revolutionary process itself subsides, hierarchies reform, power struggles ensue, careerism and privilege reign, and society ossifies.



again. This is not an argument against political struggle. In fact, the state of the world demands extreme activism on all levels as we are faced with planetary problems never before imagined. But an equally important process lies in recreating our "selves," and the battle for "who we are" takes place in the cultural arena.

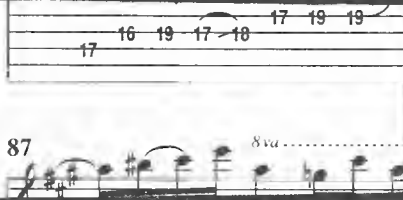
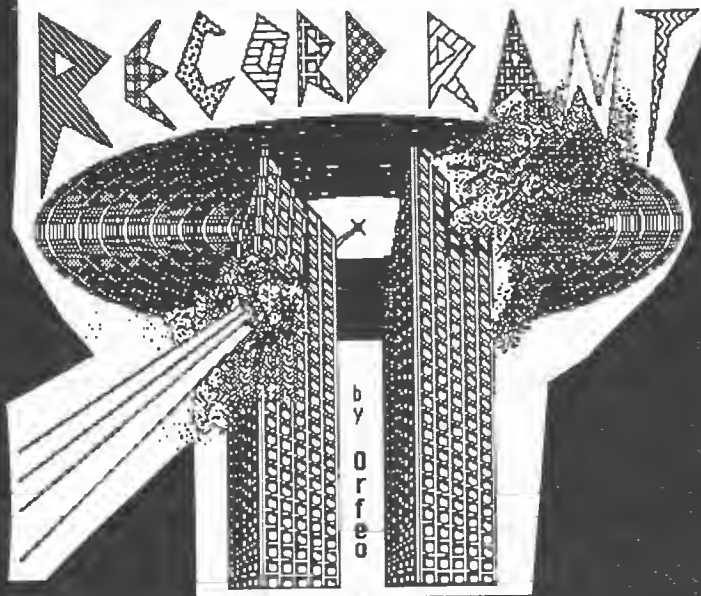
As if trying to strip away an indoctrinated world view, like the fashions we wear, so to stand naked, we must strive to create our own cultural values and reject the dominant culture's criterion. It's time to render powerless the authorities who decide the worth and character of culture. They are not just promoting art, books, or MTV for their own profit, they are promoting and reinforcing their own power and corrupt world view. The truth is that salability and recognition have no relation to the meaning and worth of art. The most profound, moving experiences may be had through unknown artists, while platinum selling albums sit in a million homes like so much toilet paper.

But how can we know our effect when all the means of measurement exist in a system and language that we reject? How do you quantify excitement, enthusiasm, inspiration, or the spirit to challenge, survive? And what is the effect of a liberating song or poem in a society that does not recognize the value in human emotions or aspirations (except when they can be packaged and sold?) Thus the singer or poet begins to feel valueless as well.

As radical artists and people we must fight to see our contribution to the world as vital and not allow ourselves to be defeated in our own minds. People are oppressed throughout the world both physically and economically, but more insidious is the oppression caused by mental attitudes. The propagation of prejudicial ideas of inferiority or nonconformity often translate into self-hatred and doubt, so the battle must be waged on a personal, as well as societal level. Maybe we cannot create a new society in our own lifetimes, but we must strive to create a new consciousness, strength and a sense of possibility in this world. This is success!

by Robin Banks

# SLOW



Every music publication I've ever written for has considered "Year's Best" lists to be beneath their dignity. Sure, they're corny, self-aggrandizing, and pointless. But what better forum than *Komotion* for airing one's crackpot opinions?

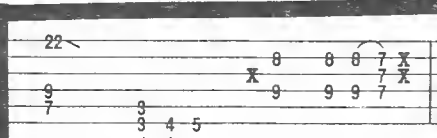
But seriously, folks, 1988 was a very interesting music year. There's some weird shit going on in the record business right now. (One sure sign that things are screwy is the fact that I was hired as a mainstream music journalist. Record companies return my phone calls--too weird!)

Things are changing and the major powers are confused. Long-standing formulas are being challenged, and the new formulas aren't quite in place yet. Consider these left-field success stories: Metallica, a Bay-area metal band with no videos, costumes, or discernable melodies releases a mega-platinum double album; the biggest new artist is a black folk-hippie who sings about "revolution;" the year's yuppie smash is *La Mystère De Voix Bulgares*, a collection of Balkan ditties about shepherds and yogurt. What's going on here? I don't have any fucking idea, and neither does the industry.

The major labels are leaving no stones unturned in their search for the next big thing, and some weird things are crawling out from under those stones. Some examples: Capitol has signed Skinny Puppy, an abrasive Vancouver band that sings exclusively about vivisection; Howie Klein, the self-made record mogul who shat upon the San Francisco worldbeat scene, is the executive producer of a series of ultrahip Afro-calypso-punk-funk compilation albums on Sire that sounds exactly like the between-sets tapes that were played at the '84-'85 worldbeat festivals; Sonic Youth, the boldest of rock bands, will probably be picked up by Warners. Is this a new era of creativity and open-mindedness?

Of course not. But that doesn't mean that we, as listeners and performers, can't profit from the situation.

And then there's the whole digital technology issue. Relatively low-priced samplers, CD players, and digital audio tape recorders offer wonderful opportunities for audio terrorism. You can buy a Sony DAT machine, and use it to steal sounds from a Sony-owned CBS recording. Remember, copyright is creative theft. Sampling is audio theft, the eye-for-an-eye retaliation. There will be a lot of great-sounding underground



recordings in the next couple of years. (The entire *Komotion International* compilation cost next to nothing to produce.) Let's go for it, gang!

...And the envelopes, please:

**Best Records By Mainstream Artists That Everybody In their Right Mind Is Sick To Death Of:**

Prince, *Lovesexy* (Warners/Paisley Park)  
Talking Heads, *Naked* (Sire)

The sonic creativity of *Lovesexy* is mind-boggling. *Naked* is the album that should have come out of the S.F. worldbeat scene.

**Comebacks Of The Year:**

Bootsy, *What's Bootsy Doin'* (Warners)  
Defunkt, *In America* (Antilles)

Bootsy makes most other funk sound stodgy and forced; it's the best P-Funk in years. Defunkt leader Joe Bowie has kicked junk, and now he's kicking ass with his best line-up yet.

**Great Single, So-So Album:**

Souxie And the Banshees, *Peepshow* (Geffen)  
Ofra Haza, *Galbi* (Sire)  
The Woodentops, *Stop This Car* (Warners)  
R.E.M., *It's The End Of The World* (I.R.S.)

Who would have thought Souxie, who was already pretty lame in '77, would ever come up with such an outrageous record? Sonically revolutionary and dripping with triple-meanings, it's a Great Single. Haza, the Yemenite disco diva, is at her off-the-wall best on the *Galbi* remix. (Thank you Howie "Worldbeat" Klein.) The remix of *Stop This Car* is hypnotic and a bit eerie; listening to the entire Woodentops album is like taking Sominex and No-Doz at the same time. And how did megaweenies R.E.M. ever concoct such a great song? I can't believe it's the same players.

94

E9

A7

E9

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### Just When You Were Giving Up On Them:

Fishbone, *Truth and Soul* (Columbia)

Poised on the brink of becoming just another "stupid-funk" band, Fishbone bounced back in a big way. Good songs, great playing, and something to say. Kudos.

### Whole Earth Access:

Even though global pop is increasingly being pitched to a purely yuppie demographic, some lovely stuff was released in '88. Best of all were the many primo ethno-pop anthologies.

The Bulgarian State Radio Choir, *La Mystere De Voix Bulgares* (Elektra/Nonesuch)

Kassav', *Vivi Pou* (Columbia)

WOMAD: *Introduction to Asia* (WOMAD)

WOMAD: *This Is WOMAD* (WOMAD)

GlobeStyle: *Worldwide Your Guide* (GlobeStyle)

Dances Of The World (Nonesuch)

You Can Tell The World: *Classic Ethnic Recordings From The 1920's* (Morningstar/Shanachie)

African Moves (Rounder)

Homeland (Rounder)

Thunder Before Dawn (Earthworks)

Heartbeat Of Soweto (Shanachie)

### The Sound Of One Head Banging:

Metallica, *...And Justice For All* (Elektra)

Living Colour, *Vivid* (Epic)

Jane's Addiction, *Nothing's Shocking* (Warners)

Metallica rules, even if they're sounding more and more like Yes. Living Colour's Vernon Reid is a terrific guitarist with a sophisticated critique of institutionalized racism in the music industry. Jane's Addiction are revisionist Led Zeppelin: all the heaviness, none of the stupidity.

### Jazz Is Coming Back. No, Really. We Mean It. This Time For Sure:

Last Exit, *Iron Path* (Venture)

Killer shit from Sonny Sharrock, Bill Laswell, Peter Brötzmann, and Ronald Shannon Jackson. Jazz like it used to be: a living, breathing music that's a reaction to, not a denial of, the world around it.

### Superhype, Inc.:

Acid House

The "New Female Artists"

Acid House should prove as rich and enduring as Blitz. And what condescension! A couple of semi-hit records by fairly intelligent women, and the industry "discovers" that women can make intellectually upscale records just as well as Englishmen.

### Coollest Band:

The Sugarcubes, *Life's Too Good* (Elektra)

Iceland's finest were a mite disappointing live, but their album is wonderful. What a voice Bjork has got!

### That's Sick!:

The Shaggs, *The Shaggs* (Rounder CD)

Stump, *A Fierce Pancake* (Chrysalis)

If you ain't heard both Shaggs albums (plus bonus live cuts) on CD, you ain't heard the Shaggs! Stump, a bizarre English band, are what the Shaggs would have sounded like if they'd been to graduate school.

### Record Of The Year:

Sonic Youth, *Daydream Nation* (Blast First)

My favorite band. Harmonically, lyrically, and structurally innovative, but rawer than beefsteak Tartare. *Daydream Nation* is totally devoid of cliché. Instead of accepting pop culture, like "mainstream" artists, or rejecting pop culture, like "underground" artists, Sonic Youth manipulate pop culture to suit their own twisted ends. Simply amazing.

### A Pat On The Back Dept:

For the bumper crop of records by artists who rehearsed and performed at Komotion. Pretty dang impressive!

Looters, *Flashpoint* (Island)  
Po Go Bo, *Po Go Bo* (Nutone)  
Penelope Houston, *Birdboys* (Subterranean)  
Limbomaniacs, *Caffe Latte* (King Green)  
The Ophelias, *Oriental Head* (Rough Trade)

The Beatnigs, *The Beatnigs* (Alternative Tentacles)  
Sister Double Happiness, *Sister Double Happiness* (SST)  
Komotion International Compilation (Raizer X)



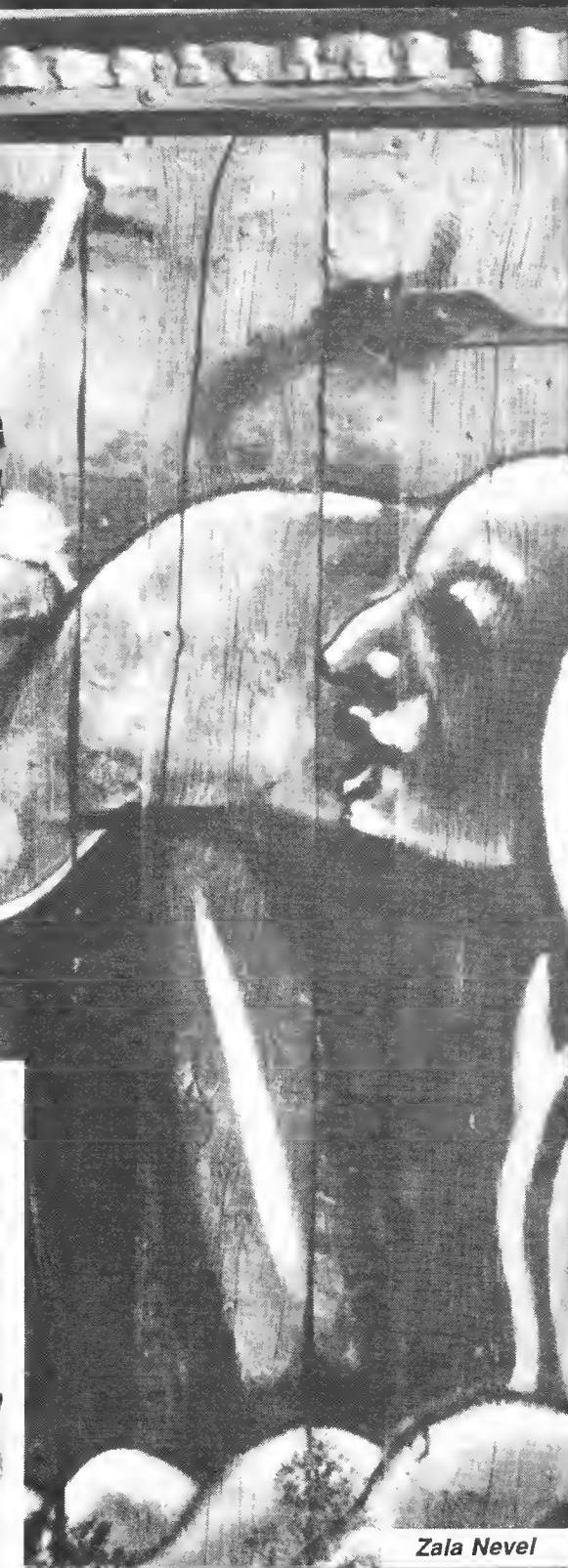
### AUTUMN SONG

Late afternoon October sun  
casts grey civic center high rise shadows  
a homeless tribe of outcast urban indians  
string their blankets  
tent-like against the back door  
of the San Francisco Planning Commission  
that deco-looking building  
with blue tinted windows  
so you can't see inside

### BLACK MESCAL

Sun scorched streets of Oaxaca  
black mescal blindness  
desperate bus ride  
through Isthmus of Tehuantepec  
going from town to town  
seeking ghostly deserted plazas  
with Indian names  
forgotten bus stations  
lights burning all night  
forlorn end of the road  
in a sad dead end town  
sick with fever  
mixing cheap mescal  
and pills  
'San Marqueña' on the jukebox  
spilling mescal tears  
on the sawdust floor





*Zala Nevel*

Mural in Balmy Alley by **PLACA**

## YOKUTS DANCE FOR THEIR DEAD

They were one of many tribes  
that lived in the area of  
what is now Folsom Lake  
though it wasn't a lake then  
and millions of years ago  
the oceans had actually  
reached these very hills  
now dry hot and barren

The Yokuts lived off small game  
acorns and a variety of insects  
including red and white termites  
grubs grasshoppers and caterpillars  
Like many California tribes  
they also wove fine waterproof baskets

In 1887 Stephen Powers an ethnologist  
described the ceremonial Death Dance of the Yokuts  
"They stayed up all night  
the women singing and everyone in a large circle.  
The men started the orations  
with many repetitions like so...  
"The women...the women...the women...shared in the  
hardest...the hardest...the hardest..work...work...work"

For three days and nights  
they would dance for their dead

Now in the land of the Yokuts  
the nights are still clear  
and dawn is still brilliant  
But there are no more Yokuts  
not around here anyway  
in this campground  
littered with multicolored nylon tents  
and pickup trucks blaring country western music

On a rocky peak overlooking the lake  
I contemplate the vastness of the landscape  
and the history of the now vanished Yokuts  
The mountains in the distance so pristine  
but up close the land is dirtied  
with cigarette butts, empty coke bottles  
and crumpled bags of Fritos

And the valley has been flooded by Folsom Dam  
the luminous blue water  
like a veil  
over the land where the Yokuts  
once danced for their dead.

--*Alejandro Murguía*





# WHO STOLE THE FUNK?

by Rickey Vincent

Have you ever wondered what happened to the soul and funk music that made you dance and think at the same time? There was a time when you *knew* that the next Earth, Wind and Fire or Parliament album you bought would make a statement that you could live by. For your five bucks, you would *expect* to get an ambitious world vision through lyrics and cover art, a butt-shaking dance beat, and a musical adventure all at once. Where did that *sheet* go?

Hip-hop samples the stuff for days, trying to recapture its inspiring essence. Modern music is still paying homage to the asskick rebel sound of James Brown, the people music of Sly Stone, and the classic soul of the seventies--what Nelson George, in his book *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, calls "redemption songs in the age of corporations."

This music came from all directions. You can start with Stevie Wonder's Grammy-winning masterpieces, *Talking Book*, *Innervisions*, and *Songs in the Key of Life*, featuring songs like "Living for the City," and "Sir Duke;" the furiously creative, jazzy R&B flavors of Kool and the Gang, from *Jungle Boogie* and *Caribbean Festival to Summer Madness*; the electric blues of the Ohio Players' *Honey and Fire*; the joyous Africano spectacle of Earth, Wind and Fire on tour, complete with huge stage props, levitating musicians, and lasers; and of course Parliament/Funkadelic and the "Landing

of the Mothership" in the Oakland Coliseum, with George "Dr. Funkenstein" Clinton proclaiming, "We have returned to claim the pyramids."

Marvin Gaye had to threaten to leave Motown before they would release his seminal *What's Going On* in 1970, but once the effort paid off, the era of big business with black style had come full circle. No

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**"...The dance is... designed to debunk the myth that meditation is most effective while sitting in the lotus position on the top of a hill."**

---

longer the "stepinfetchit sambos," "nasty Negroes," or simply "violent leather-jacket-nationalists," black culture had once again come of age, with intellect, eros, and an indulgence of style, and nowhere was it more profound than in the music.

The African torch of life-through-music was glowing brightly as a proliferation of funky, stylish acts reaffirmed the essential qualities of the African world view through an urban American disguise. More than just sex, drugs, and rock & roll, funk bands were able to preach a universal gospel, generating in the dance

music a synthesis of social substance and sexual celebration with an appeal beyond all physical boundaries.

Ebony magazine devoted a 1977 cover story to the phenomenon of the "Super Group," (including the Commodores, Rufus and Chaka Khan, the Isley Brothers, Brothers Johnson, Bootsy's Rubber Band, and airbody already mentioned:)

*As a result of the technological marriage among the poet, the musician, and the electrician, the Super Group was born. And they have been burning up the top-10 charts with infectious, platinum sound--loud, funky, electric, and breaking every social and musical taboo...Often, they sing with razors in their voice and, at other times, they wrap a melody in pure silk. The Super Groups have forced tradition to redefine the very meaning of music itself.*

Funk was more than a style, it was a movement. A hell-raising upscale party, with an Afro-centric context for exploring the metaphysical as well, where art is life and every person contributes to the artistic vitality of the group. A collective participation creating a oneness of people, a coexistence of unity and individuality, and aesthetically smashing the Western-based distinctions between music and poetry, movement and dance, religious function and practice, man and nature.

*"Tis better to be nasty than to never have been."*

--Funkadelic

Funk stood on the verge of redefining secular notions of music as performance art in fundamental ways. Were it not for racism, American icons from Elvis to the Beatles would be making room for the Thumpasorus peoples, cloned funk.

Instead, the brightest soul prophets were destroyed (Sly Stone in and out of prison, Donny Hathaway and Marvin Gaye dead,) co-opted (Isley Brothers, Teddy Pendegrass, Kool and the Gang, and Stevie Wonder all doing "safe" pop now,) or blacklisted (George Clinton, Bootsy Collins, and Gil Scott-Heron can't get their records released.) By 1980, independent record labels and local radio stations could not survive the encroachment of big business and gave way to major label hegemony and a syndicated radio cartel.

Since then, the disco-pop craze of the late seventies has done irreparable damage to the standards of pop music lyrics, and corporate music technology has left musicians out in the cold. Artists today have almost no outlet for original ideas, nowhere to turn for intimate studio production, and it shows in their product. Nowadays there is no better way to waste your money than to go to a record store and cough up eight bucks for some synthetic, over-hyped wack that has passed itself off as party music.

By far the most insidious by-product of the corporate music industry takeover has been the destruction of black pop and its capacity as the voice of its people. The innovative black entrepreneurs from Stax, Chess, Buddah, King, and Motown are now in the middle-management positions of major labels with basically zero chance for mobility. With the exception of hip-hop, music on independent labels has much less chance of exposure, and black acts are at the mercy of their major label management. John Pareles spelled it out in a 1987 New York Times article:

*...the major-label record business generally offers black performers a choice of stereotypes: nice pop band (Kool and the Gang), slick pop crooner (Luther Vandross), or nasty funk band (Cameo). Those stereotypes are self-perpetuating; across the music business it's taken for granted that what worked last year will work next year in a new suit.*

There was a time when one's favorite dance song and favorite ballad were performed by the same artist--even on the same record. After endless cycles of enforced pop formulas, artists have to eat their own shit to stay on the radio.

In the process, black pop has become a synthetic showcase of antiseptic, narcissistic, androgynous masturbation. And many consumers naïve enough to believe their radios assume that what they hear is the best stuff around. So listeners suffer, the black community slides further away from itself, whites are spoon-fed regurgitated black sambo stereotypes, racism is on the rise, and record execs laugh all the way to the bank.

The causes of the banishment of the righteous funk dance to the periphery of American society tell a deeper story about this country. Psychologists Alfred Paster and Ivory Toldson explain this in their book Roots of Soul :

*The threat that these aesthetic behaviors presented rests in the historical alienation of the European from his body and bodily drives. These dances compelled whites to confront primitive drives within themselves that had been ruled objectionable to their cultural ego-ideal and warped sense of decency. Moreover, there was undoubtedly a seething resentment for having to rely upon a racially excluded class to feed the starvation for aesthetic stimulation.*

*"If you don't understand me, it's your fault."*

--Earth, Wind and Fire

*The dance is human communication in many forms: dance as liberation, dance as copulation, dance as inspiration, dance as salvation--dance designed to debunk the myth that meditation is most effective while sitting in the lotus position on the top of a hill. Yes these are high standards, but if you can't figure out*

why you can't get off your ass and jam, that's not my problem.

To help you get a start and raise your unfunky butts to a healthy level of P. Preparation, here is your comprehensive and pretentious guide to the most dangerous dance music of the season.

1. **PUBLIC ENEMY** has led the new wave of crucial cutting edge rap (hip-hop) music. Their latest DefJam release, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold us Back*, is the most drastic and effective street statement since the heyday of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. Greg Tate says, "Public Enemy wants to reconvene the Black Power movement with hip-hop as the medium." While the jiver parts of their "Nation of Islam" line can be annoying, there is no other record that layers, compounds, and rewires the hip-hop pulse into a post-funk, post-punk scream of consciousness quite like this one.

2. **LOOTERS: *Flashpoint*** is an overlooked masterpiece of music with meaning--an eloquent fusion of dance music styles that capture the dramatic flavor of old Peter Gabriel, the rhythms and joyous poetry of Earth, Wind and Fire, the anger-in-verse of the Clash, and the fat-bottom funk of the Isley Brothers in the "Fight the Power" days. Musically, the Looters make this blend sound correct, effortless, and sincere, while conceptually they are in a class by themselves. Unfortunately they are too original for their own good, and to find the best kept secret in new music, you have to ask for their Island Records release in the "Rock" section of your local stores.

3. **BOOTS: *What's Bootsy Doin'?*** After a six-year hiatus, the *Original Rhinestone Rock Star Doll Baby Bobba* is back. Possessing a genius for expression reserved for the likes of Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone, Bootsy Collins, the bassist for P. Funk, James Brown, and his own Rubber Band, has never failed to "raise expectations to a new attention." The music of Bootsy produces a magical sensation that is silly, sentimental, and sexual all at once. His latest CBS record is no exception.

4. **ICE-T: *Power***. The freshest of the fresh hip-hop to hit the streets, ex-gang member Ice-T hits hard and pushes all the right buttons with this Sire release *Power*, his first album since recording on the *Colors* soundtrack. Ice-T captures that quintessence of violence and sex that most people crave in rap music, and fear in real life. Musically, the record is exemplary, with varying rap styles that pay respects to Kool Moe Dee, Eric B and Rakim, and EPMD (all of whom have excellent albums worth buying,) while moving Ice-T's own asskick approach into the realm of rap royalty. The music he samples is thoughtful and appropriate, and the album cover finally moves past the Ohio Players on the sexy freak-shock scale.

5. **AFRIKA BAMBAATAA: *The Light*** is one of the most ambitious records of the year. Bambaataa continues his mission to deliver the TRUTH by way of a global musical empire. One of the original members of



the hip-hop label, "Tommy Boy," in 1981, Bambaataa has long since transcended his rap roots. Now on Capitol/EMI, Afrika Bambaataa recorded *The Light* in England, and collected the most diverse group of stars to perform on one record since the "Sun City" project in 1985. James Brown, UB40, Nona Hendryx, Yellowman, George Clinton, Bootsy, and Boy George are among the guest artists for songs such as "Reckless," "Radical Music, Revolutionary Dance," "World Racial War," "Zouk Your Body," and "Clean Up Your Act." Mixing go-go, hip-hop, reggae, and P. Funk into a red-hot gumbo of stomping dance music, Bambaataa's *Light* is ahead of its time, and will show the way for others to follow and improve upon.

6. **DIGITAL UNDERGROUND: *Underwater Rimes/Your Life's a Cartoon***. By far the most original 12-inch single around, local boyeys Shock G (Greg Jacobs) and Chopmaster J (Jimmy Dright, Jr.) combine the most correct aspects of P. Funk with hip-hop to reclaim the righteous mainline of conscious black dance. *Underwater Rimes* plays up the Aqua-Boogie beat with a fresh-baited concept for 1989, and *Cartoon* has a hi-tech sound and an old-school awareness, with a style reminiscent of Parliament's "Chocolate City."

(Special hip-hop expansion awards go to **Stetsasonic**, **Shinehead**, and **Boogie Down Productions**.)

These are just the basics. While I would maintain that the best stuff is waiting in your local used record shop, most of it is out-of-print and not worth the frustration of having to sift through years of pasty pop wack releases that even the best soul artists have produced. (You can fill up on the real meat by listening to "The Uhuru Maggot's Funk Feast" on KALX 90.7 FM, Wenzdays 6-9 pm.)

It's still a crapshoot as far as the new stuff is concerned, but there is a selection, and be grateful for that. (To get a handle on all the latest dance music, check out the "Davey D Report" at local record stores, he covers clubs, hip-hop, and pop-til-you-drop.) If you settle for second best, that's what you will get.



by J.H. Tompkins

Highhandedness, egocentrism, laziness, indulgence--all of these can be justly attributed to contemporary pop journalism. The fact that we can't do without it--critical opinion, analysis and reporting (and everything masquerading as such)--only adds to the special scorn we reserve for those writers and publications who churn out the infuriating stuff. But if the faults are obvious and many, the cure is elusive. Most criticism of the media amounts to little more than a reader disagreeing with the opinion of a writer. And while this might explain the intensity of feeling, it doesn't help clarify what, if anything, is the problem.

Pop journalism, like pop music or any popular culture, draws from and is aimed at the broad masses of people. Journalism of this sort functions as a kind of clearing house for the arts--concentrating opinion and analysis, and in important ways, setting trends. The creative parameters of both are set by the marketplace. Journalists have to sell papers, just as musicians have to sell records--veer too far from the lives and concerns of the audience and no one will buy.

The existence of the vast, lucrative marketplace, and the attendant personal and artistic validation, are impossible for both the artist and journalist to ignore. Art is, after all, an exchange: the artist makes a statement, the audience experiences that statement. Without the second half of the equation, the formula is incomplete. Who can fault the artist who is lured by the possibility of creating a dialogue with an audience of millions? And who can deny that a one-sided dialogue leaves the artist unsatisfied? The fact is that even those who reject the world of popular art--the "underground"--are in a reactive position by definition; the values and creative boundaries of their existence are derived only by first acknowledging those of the pop mainstream.

Those artists who don't chase popular recognition are far from irrelevant. Their work often influences that of better-known artists, blazing a trail for others to travel. Many who labor "underground" go on to achieve mainstream popularity when pop taste undergoes one of its periodic "revolutions."

Still, it's difficult not to feel that those who make a point of eschewing the pop battlefield enjoy the safety that their purity ensures--that they're taking the easy way out. Life on the Bohemian fringe might offer maximum creative freedom, but the toughest challenge of all is submitting art to the test of the marketplace--seeking cultural significance *and* popular acclaim at the same time.

In this light, the disdain heaped on pop journalism (and, indeed, most pop culture) by Bohemian partisans, needs to be examined. It's correct and absolutely necessary to provide both challenging art and razor sharp criticism of popular culture. But if it is to be socially useful, it needs to seek a place in the popular arena *in order to* transform pop sensibilities.

This is not a defense of the sorry state of pop journalism. It suffers, like the culture it covers, from the ailments of the times. What good pop writing can and should do, is educate, and entertain in the process.

A widely-shared point of view is that good arts journalism means writing articles about "socially progressive" and/or "stylistically innovative" art and artists. It's hard to say that these sentiments are wrong, but if that's all this means, we're headed right back toward the boring (and never particularly relevant) days of socialist realism. The task facing writers who cover pop culture is to help readers make sense of it--to help them understand how and why image and opinion are shaped--to help them understand what culture means.

The meteoric rise to stardom of Tracy Chapman, this year's sensation, is a case in point. One minute she was another promising singer with an interesting new record, and the next her photo graced the cover of magazines coast to coast. It doesn't matter if she deserved the accolades--that's just opinion. What's interesting is that her lift-off exemplifies *how* pop music is important today.

In these days of warp-speed communication and dizzying informational overload, pop stars don't sprout and blossom--they're delivered. Legends are created before their subjects have performed not just great deeds, but *any* deeds worth noting. It is possible for a genuine social upsurge to exist beyond these forces for a short while, but it seems as if popular culture is quickly sucked up in ways that preclude spontaneous appreciation--the most basic exchange between artist and audience.

By the conclusion of the Amnesty Tour, listeners were no longer able to hear Chapman's music. Rather, each time her songs played and each time they saw her live, they heard their own image, their own idea of Chapman, which, in turn, had been created by repeated exposure to a broader scope of music, articles, and video--which they subsequently synthesized and shaped into the form that most suited them. Pop music might occasionally change the lives of fans--but fans *always* change what that music means.

"HIP" POP, to page 28









and in the end everyone left in a state of joyous exhaustion. Hopefully, Rad Cult will happen again next year.

The rest of September had its share of excitement. A new art exhibit featured **Jamie Morgan's** shadowy drawings of automobiles on dimly-lit streets and other *film noir* images of urban America. Sitarist **Ram** played an impassioned set of Ragas at the opening, followed by the **Tritones'** strange folk/art songs. Accompanied by a lamp and a well-dressed **Adrian** on snare drum, **Jim Campilongo** and **Josef Brinkmann** played some mean blues that took us back to the nostalgic time of crackly-sounding radios.



An idea became a reality on "Frank Nite," an event dedicated to the memory of the music--not the slime-bag McCarthy-loving politics--of Frank Sinatra ("Sun City has a great golf course...") By the end of the evening, the sophisticated guests who arrived decked out in Rat Pack attire and sat elegantly poised at candle-lit tables sipping martinis or watching Frank's early musicals on video, were soon staggering, hair disheveled, into a live performance revue which was totally improvised. Highlights: **Akal Fillinger** (in his new crew cut) tickling the electronic ivories for the evening,

creating a Nordstrom's escalator ambiance from old standards; **Jane** singing "Flipper" à la Marlene Dietrich; **Jennifer Jones** singing stunning versions of "Mack the Knife;" and our hilarious M.C. **Adrian Schafgans** singing "Cross the Border" Las Vegas-style with dancing go-go girls **Diana** and **Sandy** in the foreground. Never have I laughed so much (and never has the room spun so much) at a Komotion event!

October 15 there was a benefit for **Leonard Peltier**, a "political prisoner" of the United States government for his activism on Native American issues. The evening began with traditional singing and drumming, plaintive and beautiful. Latin American poet **Alejandro Murguía** later mesmerized the crowd, as did dancer **Gina Picado**, whose riveting presence and ritualized dances transport the audience to another world. The night shifted to an urban landscape with **Industrial Rain Forest**, and **Change**, and climaxed with a guest appearance by **MDC**, who were in town between tours and wanted to show their support for the benefit.



To benefit **Sane Freeze**, Komotion held a showing of *Coverup!* on Oct. 22. This video details the role of George Bush and other government officials in the drugs-for-arms-for-hostages-for-glory deals. Then, **Swollen Boss Toad** angrily rocked out, **Nag Nag Nag** brought new meaning to the word "METAL," and **Psychefunkapus** mashed up the late-nite crowd with youthful nasty funk deviations.

October also hosted several notable performances. **The Cohen Brothers** did a spoof/tribute to Leonard Cohen, who was in town, but the evening belonged to **Chaos**, an eclectic group of "trance" drummers, dancers, other participants and beaters of things. At regular intervals a huge, burning hot bowl of frankincense and myrrh was whisked through the wild crowd while the "management" watched in horror. All in all, a pretty unusual event... but not for Komotion!

We celebrated Halloween with the film *Witchcraft Through the Ages*, a very funny "historical" film narrated by Bill Burroughs, who dryly told the story of the suppression of women since the witch hunts in the dark ages. Basically, not much has changed since then. The jazzy soundtrack added to the camp/verite mood of the evening. **Eskimo** played a set of tight, marimba-inflected grooves which soon had people slipping on beer spilled on the dance floor. **Tooth and Nail** closed the night with a beautiful combination of electric violin and muscular beats, which gives their music a solid texture.

## "HIP" POP, from page

Does this process mean that pop music (and any art that hits the mainstream, for that matter) is co-opted from the outset? Well, yes and no. The answer is yes, if you apply the standards of the past, when cultural and social phenomena were able to germinate beyond the reach of the media and the interests of capital. But it's no, if you accept present realities, not as aberrations of a properly functioning social order, but as an aspect of that order's evolution. The world is plugged into itself like never before--and that changes the role of culture and the journalists that cover it.

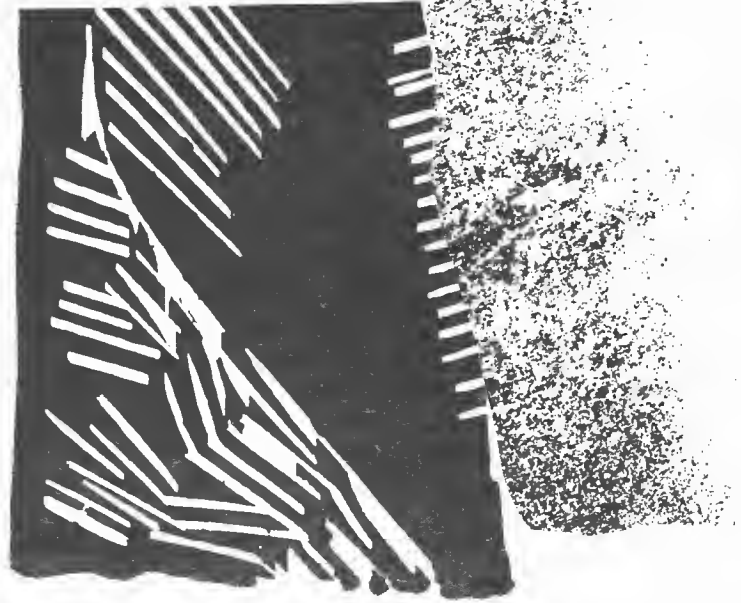
Pop music--pop culture of any kind--demands good pop journalism. Today that means accepting the responsibility of helping the reader understand what that art really means. What is delivered, of course, tends to be knee-jerk genuflection towards pop icons, or, when "getting serious," a probe into the artist's "real" personality. Hence we have efforts like *Esquire's* Springsteen exposé which goes at things exactly backwards, trying to "disprove" Springsteen's social impact by pointing to the hypocrisy in his personal life.

The truth of the allegations notwithstanding, the writer misses the point: Springsteen-as-man is irrelevant. Only Springsteen-as-myth has meaning, and the audiences created those myths, not the artist himself. Journalistic efforts like this deserve criticism, but likely as not, most of it will be misinformed. The problem is not that Springsteen is a boring, over-examined subject--it's that he's rarely examined in a way that provides any insight into his social impact.

Unfortunately, bad articles about big stars tend to play into the long standing battle between artist and journalist over what art deserves newsprint. While small, local ventures brim with promise, they lack the weight, the *meaning* that art picks up when it enters the huge pop market--not because pop art is better--it often isn't--but because simply by being in the market, it has filtered through the lives of the audience. Thus we can actually learn more about society by reading articles on Madonna or Prince, than on our favorite local group.

The point and paradox of the situation is this: the *further* the music drifts from the point of creation, the *more* meaning it gathers. Today's pop culture cannot assume stature without first becoming the property of the masses of people. Although disagreement with this premise can come from a variety of angles, it's safe to say that an essential part of the criticism is a disdain for the swarms of unenlightened folk out there.

The recent past provides a couple of examples that are instructive. Take the original fans of English rockers, The Clash, who deserted the band in droves when it had a huge hit with the arguably excellent LP, *London Calling*. Beneath the former fans' attempts at a *musical* justification for their desertion (longer, slower, softer didn't make it) was this: the band was no longer the special property of a handful of punks. Accepting an extremely popular Clash meant sacrificing the special identity they got when it was "their" band. Acceptance meant they were no better than the broad legions of fans.



The seminal San Francisco hippies, the Diggers, provided another example when, in 1967, they led a "Death of the Hippie" march that received nation-wide media attention. The action was ostensibly triggered by the bastardization of the hippie phenomenon that resulted from the national fascination with events on Haight Street. Not far below the surface, however, was an annoyance with the fact that they no longer had bohemia to themselves. Digger Emmett Grogan's self-aggrandizing biography, *Ringolevio*, serves up contempt in equal measure for "straight" society and the "nouveau hippies" who poured into The City in search of the action. It goes without saying that the next four years proved that if the notion of being a "hippie" indeed was dead in 1967, something powerful was certainly left in its wake.

It's tempting to call the aforementioned attitudes elitist--after all, changing the mess of a world we're living in is going to take *the majority*, (and who among us was born in an enlightened state?)--but it's not so simple. What's needed is the wisdom to separate the shit from the people who've had it spoon-fed to them their entire lives, and the humor to remember that we all eat a little of it, too.

The same humor is needed in the trenches of pop journalism. It's difficult for even the best efforts to remain untainted when navigating the sewers of contemporary culture. Still, if the lure of the pop market to journalist and artist is in some ways analogous to the lure of drugs to an addict, it's also like Everest is to the climber. To reach the heights, you have to risk the climb.



## THE FACT OF THE MATTER

by Annika Kahn

*Setting: a small, dimly-lit bar by the bay.*

The fact of the matter is I wasn't *born* hating myself. I mean, to be perfectly honest I *was* born with this here wart on my forehead. I was also born with the color of my skin, my eyes, and my hair. Society can't take credit for any of these birth given rights. And they are rights, ya know. They're rights because no one can take them away from you. Well, no one is supposed to take them away from you, but they try. They try real hard! I mean just look at all those advertisements of the "perfect" human being. Just look at history! (*Goes to the bathroom. Comes back with cigarette in her mouth. Orders a drink.*)

Self-hatred. Now that's something I KNOW wasn't a birth given right. My mama always used to say, and especially when she was mad, she'd say: "Girl, you must have been born with that low-down ruthless attitude of yours 'cause you sure didn't pick it up from anyone I know!" (*Inhales, long and slow.*)

I used to believe her. My mama. I used to take her word as God's spoken truth but I know better now. I know that my ruthless attitude wasn't packaged and processed in the womb! I figure that this was something I must have picked up along with all that stale self-hate we see advertised everywhere now-a-days. It's kinda like picking up a disease or a new trend of clothing or something--where you don't really know it's affecting you til it's too late. You wake up one day realizing that something strong and fierce has been at work, stripping away your identity and your self-worth. (*Stands up and heads towards bathroom again. Turns back.*)

I mean, children aren't *born* with attitudes! They're just born with basic rights. You know what I mean? (*Enters the ladies room. Returns and looks directly at imaginary audience as though for the first time acknowledging the presence of others.*)

Fantasies? Sure, I had them. We all had our share of fantasies. Right? I mean, the social structure of America alone is enough to make fantasizing something of a necessity! Well, come on. I say that any society based on competition makes fantasies an ingrained part of human life. Don't you think? Don't you? (*Plays with the ice in her glass for a moment.*) So many people are at odds with each other that they're forced to imagine something--(*voice trails off.*) ...Something better. What with all this pressure and propaganda about being "more than we can be" it's no wonder folks just straight out feel lousy. (*We hear the endless clanking of ice against an empty glass.*)

I wanted to be known! I wanted, how shall I say, ...a good reputation, that's it. I wanted respect and I thought that if I could only get those fat-assed directors to notice me, then I'd feel all right. And they did notice me, and I did feel all right. For a while. Shit, I had my audience. I had my work lined out for me. I also had my identity. (*Stares long and hard at her surroundings.*)

I was seventeen and I was scared. (*Shifts in seat and starts pulling at her sweater.*) I was doing this one-act one person bit between the bands' gigs down at this hole in the wall I used to hang out at. I made my living off the tips. I did everything from impersonations of Marilyn Monroe to dialogues between Nancy Reagan and her astrologist. I guess I kinda established a profession by acting out other peoples lives. I was good and the manager of the joint made me a regular. His customers liked me, so what'd he have to lose? (*Takes a good taste of her drink. Swallows hard.*) It was like this see: this producer-like guy picked me up after a free performance one night--if I can't buy a good meal after a show then I figure I'm giving a free performance, it's that simple.

So he said I had talent, this man did. Said he'd seen the show and the previous one too. Said he could offer me fame and fortune. I told him I'd think about it. Hell, I'd never had an offer like this before. I didn't even know what it was he was offering me. Fame? Sounded like some foreign disease to me. Sounded fun too.

I was feeling pretty bad and all doing the same thing for the same people every goddamn Tuesday night. But this producer guy kept coming back to see me. (*She lights another cigarette takes a hit and puts it out.*) The truth is the offer started to sound good. "I'll make you feel good," he said. That was it. I wanted to feel good and he was willing to pay me for it. It was like reverse psychiatry: I was the patient and I was making the bucks.

I signed a contract and for the next four-and-a-half years I performed with people that called themselves producers, directors, and even experts! Experts on what you want to know? Shit, they were experts on everything. They knew how to control people and they were darn right professional about it! (*Excuses herself. Returns looking a little pale.*)

That's when I was seventeen. That's when I thought that if only someone notices me, if only someone tells me at least every other day that I'm "good," then I'll make it in this world. An identity dose every other day. I was addicted and it backfired! It backfired because no one can really give you your self-respect and no one, and I don't care how prestigious they are, can give you your identity. (*Stands up as though ready to leave but decides to sit down again.*)

So, I had an illusion. I thought I could be something above the ordinary. They told me I could do it and I believed them. I really believed them! I was playing the game of me versus everyone else and I felt stuck there. Shit, I felt stuck there because I didn't know there was anywhere else to go. They wanted me to be competitive and to think that the ultimate means to happiness is success. Something they could sell me in one form or another.

The problem, though, (*laughing aloud a little.*) the problem is that I never really tasted the success I so badly wanted. They never would have allowed this. That would have given me a sense of accomplishment, and maybe even a sense of strength too. And *that* would have meant that me, a piddly little human being, might actually have taken her life into her own hands. And that, in my opinion, is exactly what the world is trying to avoid!

(*Turns from audience and beckons to the bartender. We hear the bartender in the background mixing more drinks as he says quietly over the music, "Yeah, Vera; that's right. That's exactly what the world is trying to avoid." The music plays on.*)



# THE ART MARKET AND OTHER THINGS

by Richard Olsen

In the sixties and early seventies, the ultimate insult was that your art had become a commodity: that you had sold your soul to the market place, or, if you hadn't sold your soul but had sold your work, you were but a pawn in the capitalists' game and hence were implicated as an accomplice. The bottom line, at any rate, was that if your works were commodities, this negated any positive contribution you had to offer.

People would attempt to justify this viewpoint by quoting books by Marx which they had bought and which were themselves commodities.

If they had *read* those books, however, they would have realized that a commodity is a two-sided thing. It has *exchange value*, (which is where the element of profit comes in,) and it has *use value*, (or else no one would want to buy it, and consequently the exchange value could never be realized.)

The two sides interpenetrate but neither automatically negates the other. The fact that Marx's book sold, for instance, hardly lessens the significance of what he had to say. A distinction must be made between the object in question, and the mode of distribution through which it reaches people.

The same holds true in the art world. The fact that Sue Coe's work (see Komotion #1) sells for thousands of dollars does not negate her message. Even if the use value for the buyer is in terms of financial investment, the use value it has for us remains a condemnation of the system that reduces life--including art--to such "investments." One might argue that Coe is using the system to protest against it, and, by reaching a vast audience, is helping to bring the system down.

Nonetheless, the market *is* an alienating and oppressive beast. And if it places profits before human needs in general, it has particular ramifications in the world of art. Galleries, which are the main institutions through which artists show and distribute their work, are a case in point. Creations of merchant capital in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they purchase or agree to sell the work of a producer, in this case the artist, on the market. They are the middle men between the artist and the public, exhibiting art for purchase and pocketing a cut from the sale.

Since the gallery, like all merchants, must ultimately "sell or die," overall it is only those artists who are interpreted as marketable that are picked to show. Thousands of artists, then, are objectively censored according to the projected economic value of their work alone. The problem which arises isn't only that the vast majority of artists have to support themselves with other jobs and frequently live at the poverty level, but that *their work is not seen*. Besides frustrating the artists, this leads to a distorted picture of art itself, as if the work shown and given publicity were a reflection of the dominant, or even the most important work produced.

Digging deeper into some of the underlying processes involved, contradictory patterns emerge. Galleries not only develop a vested interest in the artists they have, but, given the precarious state of the commodity, ("Will it sell or not?") tend to repeat past successes. This not only results in the exclusion of other artists, but in the creation of tremendous hype regarding the significance of the artists the galleries do represent, effecting, as such, our very vision of art.

On the other hand, since galleries are in competition with each other, if, in order to get ahead, one gallery suddenly pushes a new art form and succeeds, other galleries will often follow suit, replacing many of their regular artists with new ones. This leads to false concepts of change, as if a mere change in fashion is synonymous with that which is born of deeper changes in society.

As for the artists, faced with the problem of showing or not, they are under pressure to cater to what they think the galleries want. The mystification of art, as such, is compounded by pulls on the artist's own integrity: whether or not to put one's salability above one's self and become a slave to the market. If succumbed to, alienation becomes complete.

As for those that are picked up by a gallery, other contradictions arise. If they are pressured to produce new work, this may run against their own creative drives. At other times their work might be kept from the public until its market value increases. And, of course, their present prestige and support by the gallery is as precarious--given the going trend--as the commodity itself.

A particularity of the fine arts might be mentioned as well. The principal buyers of art are of the upper classes, a fact that effects the scene in a myriad of ways, from the cocktail parties to the overall climate which has a way of keeping the general populace out. If this is a point of frustration for many artists who would like to reach a broader audience, it is not surprising that it influences the dominant art produced as well.

None of this is to say that rebellious artists, even some revolutionary artists, can't periodically "get in;" the competition between galleries will sometimes open up opportunities in their search for new work. In addition, a few sympathetic dealers have been known to show a sampling of such works on a regular basis, provided they have a stable base of artists that will generate the profits they require.

It *is* to say, however, that the market itself is an exploitative and oppressive mode. It would be no exaggeration to say that its very nature is opposed to art and everything art represents.

For these reasons, a number of artists have chosen a different road. Rather than trying to squeeze into its midst, they have chosen to work outside the market or on its fringe. A number of smaller galleries have appeared, formed not on the basis of profit, but



of a given philosophy and/or are run by the artists themselves. Some artists have superceded the gallery scene per se by moving into publications or by taking their works directly to their streets. In this way, they have tried to gain control of their work and to make their art more accessible to society at large.

This has been a significant development in the realm of art dissemination. Relatively autonomous from the market, these alternative means of distribution also have shown historically some of the more daring works of their time--from the early impressionists, dadaists and surrealists, to the punks and graphittists of our own immediate past. And today, they continue to do so.

History, however, has also revealed the existence of these groups to be a relative and conditional one. If they have rebelled against the major commercial galleries, those same galleries frequently have looked upon them as a testing ground, a reservoir from which to siphon new blood when profit calls. Moreover, the fact that such alternatives usually exist at survival level makes their existence a tenuous one, and the pull to cater to the market is always present. Some dissolve

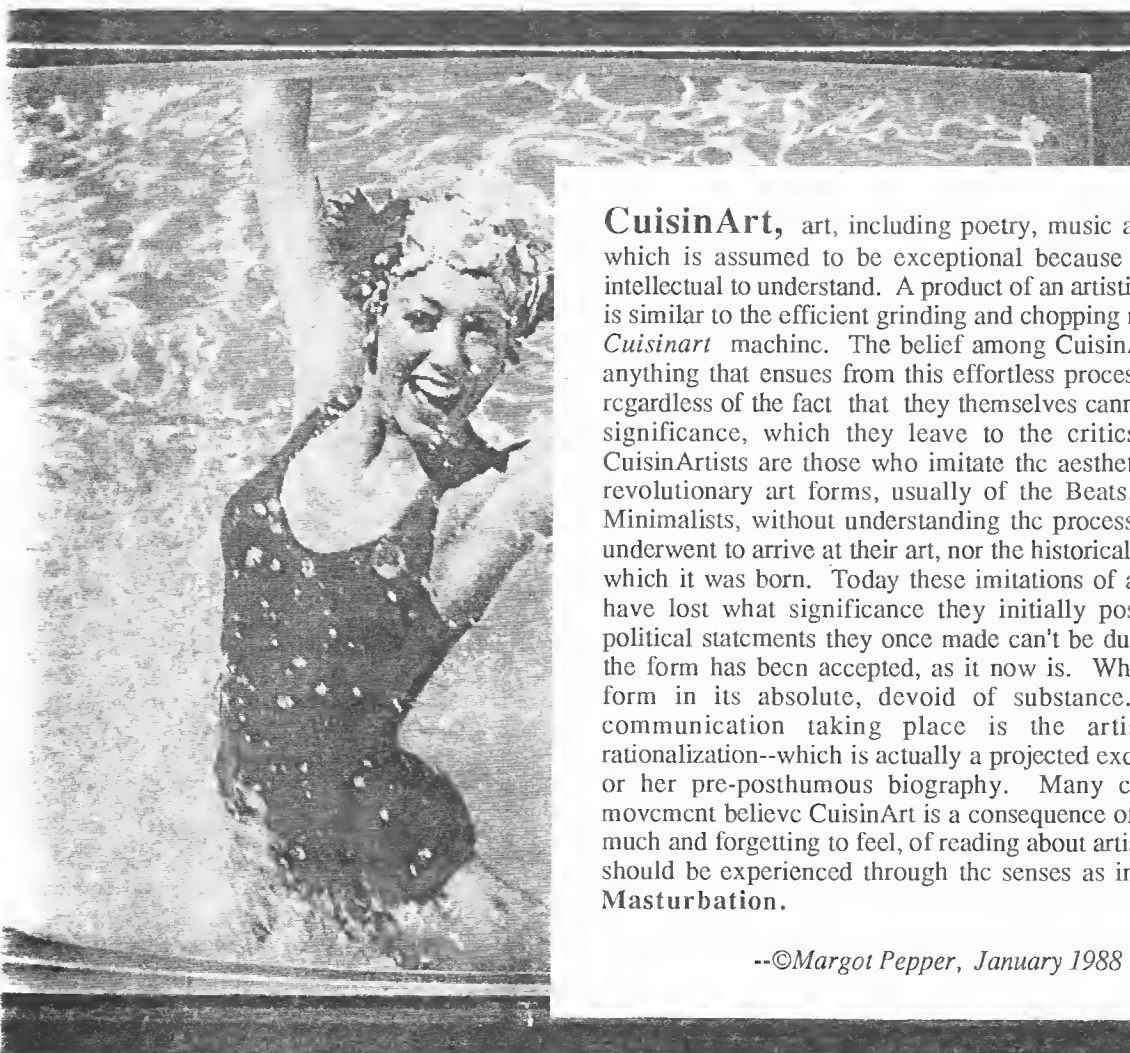
because they are unable to survive according to their ideals; others have grown into major institutions of distribution in their own right and have become susceptible to the same drives as the galleries against which they originally rebelled.

Neither path is inevitable. Nor, if the latter road is taken, does it mean an automatic sell-out. Certain, however, are the pulls of the dominant form of distribution upon everyone who enters it. And in one way or another, just by living in a capitalist country, we all enter into it.

Engles wrote that human beings make history, but from within a given environment which conditions them. Such speaks not only of the effect that a situation has on the individual, but of the individual in relation to that situation. If people can still think and create for themselves within a capitalist society, so can the artist, (even some dealers,) whether he is within the market or outside of it.

There is no question that a different mode of distribution is needed, not only in art, but across the board. Whether to work inside or outside the market is a question of tactics. Speaking personally, I'd prefer an explosion from *all* sides....

# ENCYCLOPEDIA



**CuisinArt**, art, including poetry, music and literature, which is assumed to be exceptional because it seems too intellectual to understand. A product of an artistic method that is similar to the efficient grinding and chopping method of the *Cuisinart* machine. The belief among CuisinArtists is that anything that ensues from this effortless process is brilliant, regardless of the fact that they themselves cannot explain its significance, which they leave to the critics to discern. CuisinArtists are those who imitate the aesthetic aspects of revolutionary art forms, usually of the Beats, Dadaists or Minimalists, without understanding the process these artists underwent to arrive at their art, nor the historical context from which it was born. Today these imitations of archaic forms have lost what significance they initially possessed; the political statements they once made can't be duplicated once the form has been accepted, as it now is. What remains is form in its absolute, devoid of substance. The only communication taking place is the artist's lengthy rationalization--which is actually a projected excerpt from his or her pre-posthumous biography. Many critics of the movement believe CuisinArt is a consequence of thinking too much and forgetting to feel, of reading about artists when they should be experienced through the senses as intended. See **Masturbation**.

--©Margot Pepper, January 1988

## To A Barbed-Wire Harp

In the flatlands of the North  
collar raised against the night wind  
my steps filled with purpose  
I walk the circle of the yard

Fence made of chains  
six strands of barbed-wire  
always on my right  
you quiver in the wind  
Friend of my rounds  
barbed-wire harp  
Aeolian whispers  
encouraging me

I long to lean  
upon you tonight  
hook my fingers into the links  
lay my cheek against cold wire  
but the lights would reveal me  
the cameras would report me  
the speakers would call me  
for questions again

I walk on  
for I cannot linger  
I'll live without  
your metallic embrace  
the wind plays softly in my hair  
thrusting it back away from my face  
as you used to do  
as you used to do

Fence made of chains  
six strands of barbed-wire  
always on my right  
you quiver in the wind  
Friend of my rounds  
barbed-wire harp  
Aeolian whispers  
encouraging me



This poem is adapted from the writing of "Katya" Komisaruk. Following a successful direct action against the Vandenberg Airforce Base Navstar Computer, the brain of a weapons control center, Katya gave herself up and has been incarcerated for a minimum five-year sentence. Royalties from any of her published works are subject to attachment by the Government.

-C.P.

# THE INVISIBLE

Margot Pepper

Miguel Rivera. The small child with the dough boy face who is so silent, so ordinary, he fades into the classroom like the worn wooden chair with the shorter leg in the sea of newer plastic chairs. I change the seating arrangement with the hope that the class might settle down. Miguel ends up at the edge of a table, a void between him and the rest like the gap in the smile of a woman who is missing a tooth. I assign Laura the seat. She approaches me and whispers,

--Nooo Ms. Werker...please don't put me there...he smells like pee!--

One day I sit next to him to encourage his art work. He is a wonderful artist--science fiction rocket ships which happily lack the military connotations present in most elementary school drawings. All too easily I remember Laura's words. It is not the smell of urine, however. It is the smell of the homeless--the smell which intrudes upon the daydream of a stroll down the Venice Beach boardwalk on a fine morning, momentarily spoiling the sparkle in the sea air.

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*"...Who will lend their voice to these ineffable sounds that they may begin to shape themselves in the ears of those who might listen? Will we, with our pens and paints and cappuccino froth on our lips? ..."*

---

It is the smell which hovers by the boardwalk's shabby green Pagodas, yesterday-theaters of Beat poets, today, the churches of the new order of St. Ronald's mendicants where Jeanie is suffering another fitful sleep of scratching and twitching.

With a start she is up, pendulous breasts disturbingly visible under a filthy sweatshirt, the back of her sweat pants stained below the buttocks with how many months of passion unfulfilled, blood of the child which if nature is kind shall never be born? She knocks down the metal trash container and smashes bottle after bottle on the ground because there is no liquor inside.

--Fuck off god! Fuck off, God!-- her voice sexless, gruff as a coal miner's.

It is the smell of Elizabeth, the English girl who came to Venice with her father and enrolled in ballet school at Antioch. But they were too strict: as demanding as her mother. Every year her father returns and tries to persuade her to return to England with him. Her father indeed. Her father where was he when her mother was abusing her? And now her nice flowered dresses hanging limp on searecrow limbs. Her hair has become matted, her pretty face has broken out. She throws her sandals at the Cadillac Hotel doors and stands in the middle of the boardwalk screaming at them, those bloody bastards, their bloody nerve. She paid her rent. She only wants to shower. Those bloody bastards. She counts her change and buys a coffee at Cafe Croissant, heavy on the milk, nine packets of sugar, then calls out for Jeremy, her new boyfriend. He's drinking from a paper bag and talking to himself. Slowly, a shy grin sweeping across her face, Elizabeth starts towards him on the sides of her feet, toes curled until the new calluses form.

It is the smell of Ysidro the Chicano who can't find work because he is not illegal, but that is all right. God will help him. He doesn't drink, doesn't smoke. He just wants an honest living. He has been lucky. He is still here even though it rained last night. And you know what? You know what? He just got a job clearing away some brush and the mess the dogs left. And you know what? You know what? It's gonna be all right, God bless you, no really, God bless you, he means it.

And it is the smell of the amputee with the peg leg who had collapsed, cheek upon the hard cement, hand outstretched, just outside the Nuart theater last Fourth of July, his walker beside him like a guard dog keeping watch and people passing by like a trail of ants around a pebble in their path. Who can blame them for not noticing? They are meditating upon the significance of those magical words in "Lost Horizon," the film they have just seen. It is really so simple, Shangri-La, they say. All we have to do is be kind. What's so difficult about that?-- "Be kind."

Who, then, is the *Viridiana* \* who will pull a beach towel from her ear and place it under his head? His solid, heavy head. Who would have thought a head could be so heavy? Who will stroke his oily hair, his dusty hair, the forehead like your grandmother's in the hospital, your lover's on the pillow?

Who will listen to his story? His language, alien, guttural, muted by the gravel of indifference, of a lifetime of rejection and obstacles as persistent as the flash-backs. His utterances, mere gestures in a void, fossils from that dark unspeakable place. The fossils of longing, the echo of their essence long since forgotten like the wife and the future and the reasons.

Who will lend their voice to these ineffable sounds that they may begin to shape themselves in the ears of those who might listen? Will we, with our pens and paints and cappuccino froth on our lips? We, whose brains are bloated with books and galleries and clubs and plays, with art films, rallies, poetry readings and cafés; our nuit-blanc conversations with potential poets, potential musicians, potential radicals, potential contacts, potential names emblazoned upon the sturdy spine of a thousand thick biographies of which we will each be a page, a chapter, and eventually an entire bookshelf in a used bookstore. We who create our own legends but do not create--I have here the anodyne, the double-ended crystal which is guaranteed to replace impotence with Super-Extra ACTION. And all we must do is take a deep breath of what lies before us, down here on the cold cement.

We are already beginning to heal. We feel uncomfortable. We have noticed the stench. The stench which makes us feel guilty because we can't wait to wash our hands clean, even though it may well be the stench of another human being like ourselves lying here on the sidewalk.

But it is all right. We can wash our hands. It is not his pride we are washing down the drain. He has no ego. He is the supreme *fakir* \*\* who has attained the enlightenment we seek in our metaphysical bookstores and our thousand acupuncture treatments. No, it is not his essence we want to soap and lather away. It is the acrid, putrid stench of ignorance, of government, of questions never asked, of languages not understood, of a seat next to a little boy that is as empty as the fears which refuse to fill it.

No matter. America will make it all clean with colognes and anti-perspirants and mouthwash and air-fresheners. America will douche and dab and sprinkle and spray and then America will cover the whole mess up with make-up and designer labels. We are busy. We don't have time to sift through the information, to think, to feel. Because if we did, we might begin to look at things. Really to look at things. Like the peg leg on an amputee; to trace the stiff dead wood back to the point at which the flesh has been severed, back through the flesh to the grotesque event itself, back to a labyrinth of causes so complex and so insidious it makes our heads swim. How humble we would feel then!

Today a man came to the classroom door during reading hour. I thought it was a workman--a janitor--but he looked too grubby for that. Perhaps a drunk. As I approached him I noticed the crooked teeth, the black stubble like dried chocolate ice cream on his face, his black greasy hair, stained shirt. He put a piece of paper in my hands and nervously began to mumble something with embarrassment in a Spanish I could not decipher. But one word. Miguel. Miguelito with the last name of a famous painter he had never heard of, though his father had and he smiled and shook his head with humility when I asked if there was any relation. The paper said Mr. Rivera was to accompany Miguel to the auditorium as he had just qualified for the gifted program.

The boy who is always first in line to come back to the classroom after lunch. He stands quietly, clutching his little metal lunch box in both arms, waiting. His dull blue synthetic jacket on, even in summer weather. A good student. The child who will listen, who will do very well on tests, who will never give you any trouble--so little trouble I almost forgot him.

*\*Viridiana:* In Buñuel's controversial anti-Catholic film by the same name, Viridiana is a nun who dedicates her life to helping the drags of society, more out of a moral sense of duty than of compassion.

*\*\*Fakir:* According to Ouspensky, one of the three paths to immortality: "The fakir strives to develop physical will, power over the body. This is attained by means of terrible sufferings, by torturing the body."

# BOOKS TO READ

by Mat Callahan

The rise and fall of the mechanistic world view and the direction a new "dialogue with nature" can take are the subjects of this book. Rather than launching a one-sided attack on Newtonian physics, the authors examine the "machine age" that gave rise to and, in turn, was shaped by Newton's physics. The book follows the development of science, physics in particular, through the breakthroughs made by Einstein and the new problems posed by quantum physics. Most significantly, it challenges the concept of nature's "immutable laws," under which man may become "master" of the universe.

The authors suggest that humans are engaged in an ongoing dialogue with nature and that the language with which we converse must be freed of the old, fixed premise which at one time brought about revolutionary changes in society but is now holding it back. This idea is not simply a matter of words and symbols, but is based on actual discoveries that reveal the limitations of much of what has been held true up 'til now. Central, is the role of time.

In the deterministic cosmos of Newton, and even in the relativistic one of Einstein, what is sought by science is the great unifying theory by which nature's "secret" will be revealed, for all time. By isolating processes found in nature for the purposes of study, science has tended to ignore the consequences of *all* processes taking place in time. Time contains the elements of randomness, accident, and unpredictability so vexing to science precisely because it assumes that time takes the direction of an arrow, not a circle: time moves inexorably "forward," never reversing itself. Science has sought the ability to *predict* results and thus direct human effort toward goals with reasonable expectations of success. Discovering processes that are "always" true, independent of time, and are therefore guarantors of success--provided we come to understand and *master* them--is both the great triumph of Western Civilization and the great stumbling block of humankind's further advance.

Machines are predictable. They exist, in part, as a result of the view that the universe is a machine--an incredibly complex, multi-faceted machine, but a machine nonetheless; the difference between "living" matter and "dead" matter is a sentimental illusion based on differences in *function*. Machines are superior to humans in that they are vastly more powerful, efficient, reliable and precise. They have given their owners the ability to conquer the world and to subjugate whole cultures by overpowering them physically and by ridiculing them culturally, spiritually, intellectually... whatever. It is this "success," which the world has witnessed with a mixture of admiration and horror for the last three-hundred years, that has given such credibility to mechanistic thinking on the one hand, and such *moral* force to its opponents, (myself included,) on the other.

Many who battle with oppressive systems reject science altogether as a western European creation inseparably linked to those responsible for the suffering the world endures. The authors state that there is a revolution going on in the *world-wide* scientific community that must lead to sweeping changes in the way people think and the way we relate to nature and to each other. Everything, every process, including the universe itself, has a history, a course of development. Nothing exists in a fixed, permanent state of *being*. Rather, everything is in a process of *becoming*. Indeed, the universe is "living" rather than "dead." Not predictable, like a machine, but uncertain. Not orderly, but chaotic. Not timeless, but growing, never the same.

Do the authors, then, repudiate themselves, their science, their purpose? On the contrary, they argue convincingly that it is this new physics--the physics of probabilities and statistical projection; the physics by which order *spontaneously* emerges from chaos; the physics in which the *exception* to the rule "overthrows" the rule and gives rise to a new process of becoming--that enables us to apply the lessons gained from human inquiry to the problems facing human society as a whole--not only European. Furthermore, by proving that time is central to the understanding of complex processes, the authors are able to reinterpret and build upon what is useful in the theories of Newton, Einstein, and quantum physics, while seeing beyond their limitations.

ILYA PRIGOGINE AND ISABELLE STEGNER'S

ORDER OUT OF CHAOS

The average person, at least in the industrialized countries, would likely say this is a chaotic, dangerously uncertain world. Science took the stage a few centuries back and promised order, harmony, and steady progress towards the elimination of suffering and the creation of a utopia on earth. It gained enormous force and seemed, in spite of growing evidence to the contrary, capable of delivering the goods. But the experience of *this* century has shaken science to its foundations. Not because scientific discoveries have ceased to astonish and capture the popular imagination, but because in light of two world wars, massive environmental destruction, and the increasingly gloomy predictions for the future of life on this planet, the promise science held for us, it seems, has been broken.

And not only that. The philosophies and religions of peoples all over the world, the pre-technological cosmologies that were debunked as superstition and childish fantasies, don't look so ridiculous anymore--compared to this overblown, pompous, power-mad "beast" called science. The emperor, it would appear, has no clothes.

This book, then, is nothing short of a thorough criticism of science, the scientific community and the underlying social forces that perpetuate its rigid, self-serving doctrines that are, in essence, prejudiced and "*unscientific*." Its discoveries demand a total reappraisal of methods of inquiry, technology, and power relationships, and reassert the close interconnectedness of all things, particularly in the fundamental relationships between humans and nature and humans and each other. Finally, in a manner of marked humility, the authors call for the overthrow of the old belief systems that are so entrenched in the social practices of the scientific community and society at large.

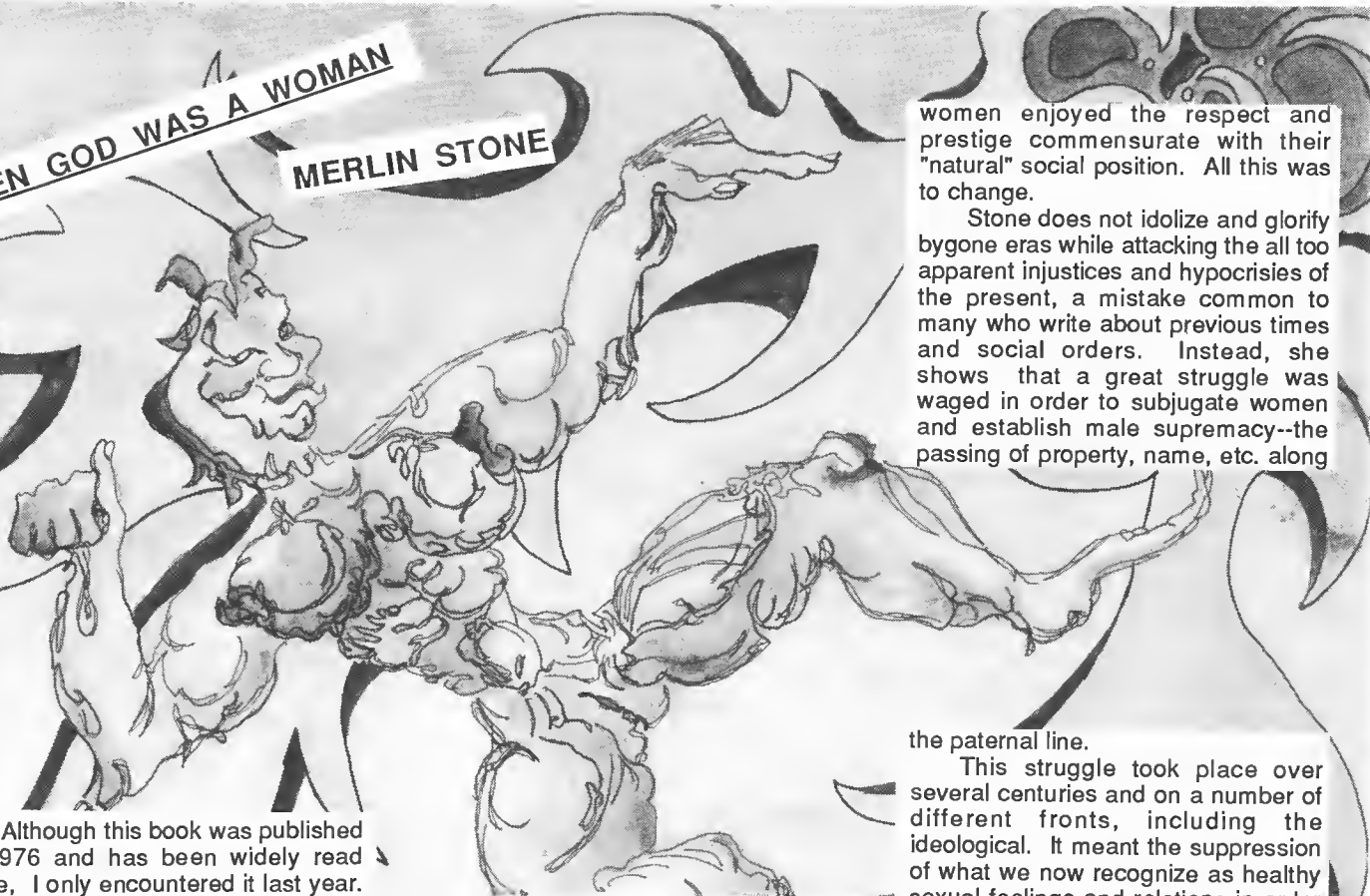
We are actors, not spectators. We are participants in an unfolding mystery. We are changing things and are being changed. As a physicist quoted in the book puts it: "I am a disturbance, a whirlwind in a turbulent nature."

Must reading, even if it's hard!



# WHEN GOD WAS A WOMAN

MERLIN STONE



Although this book was published in 1976 and has been widely read since, I only encountered it last year. Its premise and the questions it raises are of such profound importance that I felt it necessary to bring it to the attention of Komotion's readers, either as a reminder or as an introduction.

At the center of western culture is the myth known to all of us: the fall of man from the Garden of Eden because of the weakness, the sinfulness of women. *Woman* was born of Adam's rib, through the act of a male god, to provide the original human--*man*--with a companion in paradise. The serpent then duped Eve into tasting the forbidden fruit, thereby precipitating all the evils in the world.

Now, it's tempting to laugh at this tale as one might laugh at a National Enquirer headline: **"MAN GIVES BIRTH TO WOMAN: Doctors Astounded!"** But when you stop to ask how something so patently absurd could take hold of an entire civilization and deeply affect its history to the present day, it's not only NOT funny, it's downright sinister. Everyone knows that women give birth, not men. Why would this "role reversal" at the beginning of time play such a vital part in the creation myth of Judeo-Christian society?

Archeology is a relatively new science. Although there were earlier attempts at unearthing human history otherwise lost in antiquity, it wasn't until the time of the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in Egypt by Napoleon's troops that it really began to develop

as a field of systematic study. In the last hundred years, many sites have been explored, much has been "dug up," and the basis for a new understanding of the true origins of Adam and Eve have become available. But even with the new discoveries, the prejudices found in the analyses of the virtually all-male, archaeological, scientific community actually reveal more about what's at stake in this endeavor to understand human history.

Through a new look at the findings of earlier studies, the author discovers that *deliberately* hidden by the Bible and buried in the sands of the near and Middle East was a society that flourished long before the emergence of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This was a civilization whose creation myth centered on the female, the mother, the life-giving being that was both the source of the universe as a whole and everybody's mother in particular.

Not surprisingly, virtually all societies in the world, prior to contact with Jews, Christians, or Moslems, have similar tales of their beginnings. After all, it is evident that women give birth to all children, male and female. It is not, however, evident that men have something to do with it! As a matter of fact, not so long ago there was a time when *no one* knew how offspring were conceived! But *everyone* had a mother. Hence, family lineage, names, property, etc. were passed along the female line and

women enjoyed the respect and prestige commensurate with their "natural" social position. All this was to change.

Stone does not idolize and glorify bygone eras while attacking the all too apparent injustices and hypocrisies of the present, a mistake common to many who write about previous times and social orders. Instead, she shows that a great struggle was waged in order to subjugate women and establish male supremacy--the passing of property, name, etc. along

the paternal line.

This struggle took place over several centuries and on a number of different fronts, including the ideological. It meant the suppression of what we now recognize as healthy sexual feelings and relations in order to control the production of children, and to keep their identity primarily associated with the father. It meant higher regard for the pursuit of material wealth over the reverence for life. And it was accomplished by brutal conquest and the institutionalization of man's inhumanity to women.

It is in this light that the grotesque distortion of nature embodied in the Adam and Eve story can be seen for what it was and is: the attempt to establish the *divine* right of man over woman, to instill "the fear of God [that] will therefore repress any impulse towards revolt in the downtrodden female." (Simone de Beauvoir)

This view of history is a radical departure from that which arose during the last two centuries with the various revolutions. It raises some questions that have been ignored or paid lip service to by many social scientists and revolutionaries the world over--and suggests some answers.

Stone rips away at the fossilized prejudices embedded deeply in our consciousness in her powerful concluding remarks: "Perhaps when women and men bite that apple--or fig--at the same time, learn to consider each other's ideas and opinions with respect, and regard the world and its riches as a place that belongs to every living being on it, we can begin to say we have become a truly civilized species."

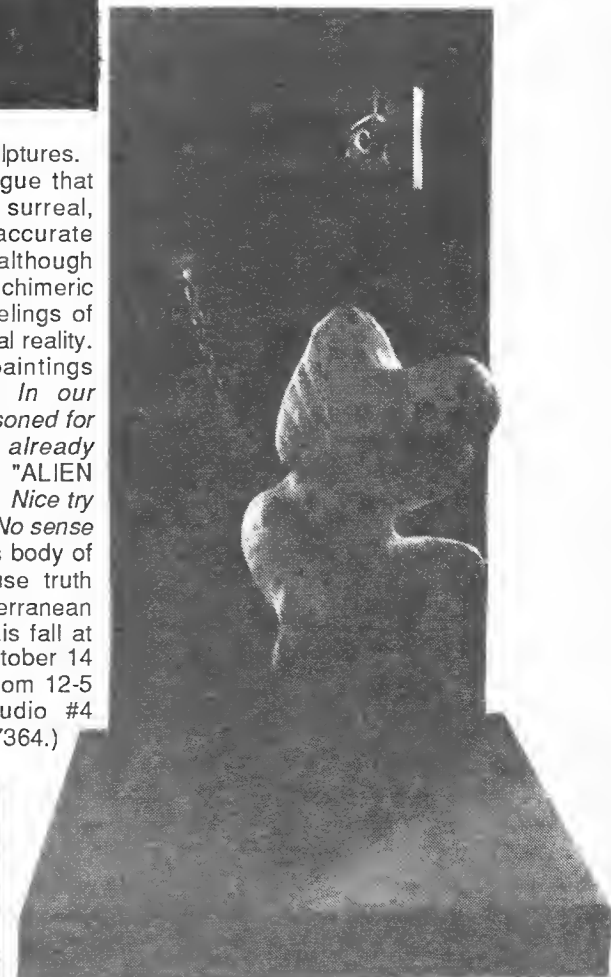


Frank Garvey

On October 26 our gallery walls were graced with **Frank Garvey's** paintings and sketches. Often reminiscent of Goya, but unlike anything around today, his sophisticated sketches revealed the insight and eloquence of one of the most exceptional artists in the Bay Area. "The Leader:" a man dancing along as if part of a carnival holding a string of balloons, which are in fact the disembodied heads of men trailing sleepily behind him. Yet the sketch is but a study for a fractional component of one of Garvey's mammoth paintings, which he houses at his gallery in Oakland, Theatre Concrete. Here, one is overwhelmed by the man's body of work--what he calls his WALL of ASHES installation. It includes thirty-three paintings in oil and liquid acrylic, twelve sculptures, and a somewhat humorous thirty-minute video which has succeeded in recreating the language

spoken in his paintings and sculptures.

While art critics might argue that Garvey's work is extremely surreal, social realism is a more accurate description. His paintings, although seeming to portray an entirely chimeric world, clearly convey the feelings of horror and absurdity in our social reality. The titles to his smaller paintings reiterate this: "SOLITARY: *In our country people are rarely imprisoned for their ideas because we're already imprisoned by our ideals;*" "ALIEN LOVE: *Love's not for the poor. Nice try though. Now go back to work. No sense blaming yourself.*" If Garvey's body of work seems fantastic it is because truth has been suppressed to a subterranean level. Look for his exhibit this fall at Theatre Concrete Saturday October 14 through Sunday October 22 from 12-5 (4001 San Leandro St., Studio #4 Oakland, 94601 Tel. 415-532-7364.)



## NEWZ 'N REVIEWZ

The **Komotion International** Record Release Party happened on Wednesday, Nov. 9, the day after the so-called election. Poet **Peter Plate** gave voice to the feelings of the crowd as he slowly transformed their disappointment into rage with one of his most electrified performances. The atmosphere was supercharged as the capacity crowd was transfixed by **Penelope Houston**, and sweated to the ritualistic invocations of **World Entertainment War's** lead singer, **Rob Brezsny**. These performers are on the album, as well as the **Looters**, **Ogie Yocha**, **Snakewalk**, **Yeastie Girlz**, **Beatnigs**, **Sister Double Happiness**, **Po Go Bo**, **Alejandro Murgula**, and **Don Bajema**. A feast of music and poetry on vinyl!

This is the first of a series of live records that will issue from the creative vaults of Komotion. More poetry and music will be out in the future. The first record showed everyone that an idea pursued can flower into a reality. The quality is excellent; a must for the time of digital standards that we inhabit.



No matter how serious, political or dedicated one might be, everyone's got to let their hair down, put on those dancin' shoes and get **STUPID** once in awhile, right!? It's the only way to keep sane through the rest of it and besides, it's **fun!** (Remember fun?) So we got real stupid and had a great time on November 19, declared **STUPID FUNK NIGHT**. (See photos of "stupid funk dancers and party-ers.") DJ **Uhuru Maggot** was point man for the funk, while **Swamp Trouser** spun and scratched on the turntables and the dance floor! Two "all killer, no filler" bands tore the roof off the sucker til' the wee hours. The **Double D Nose**

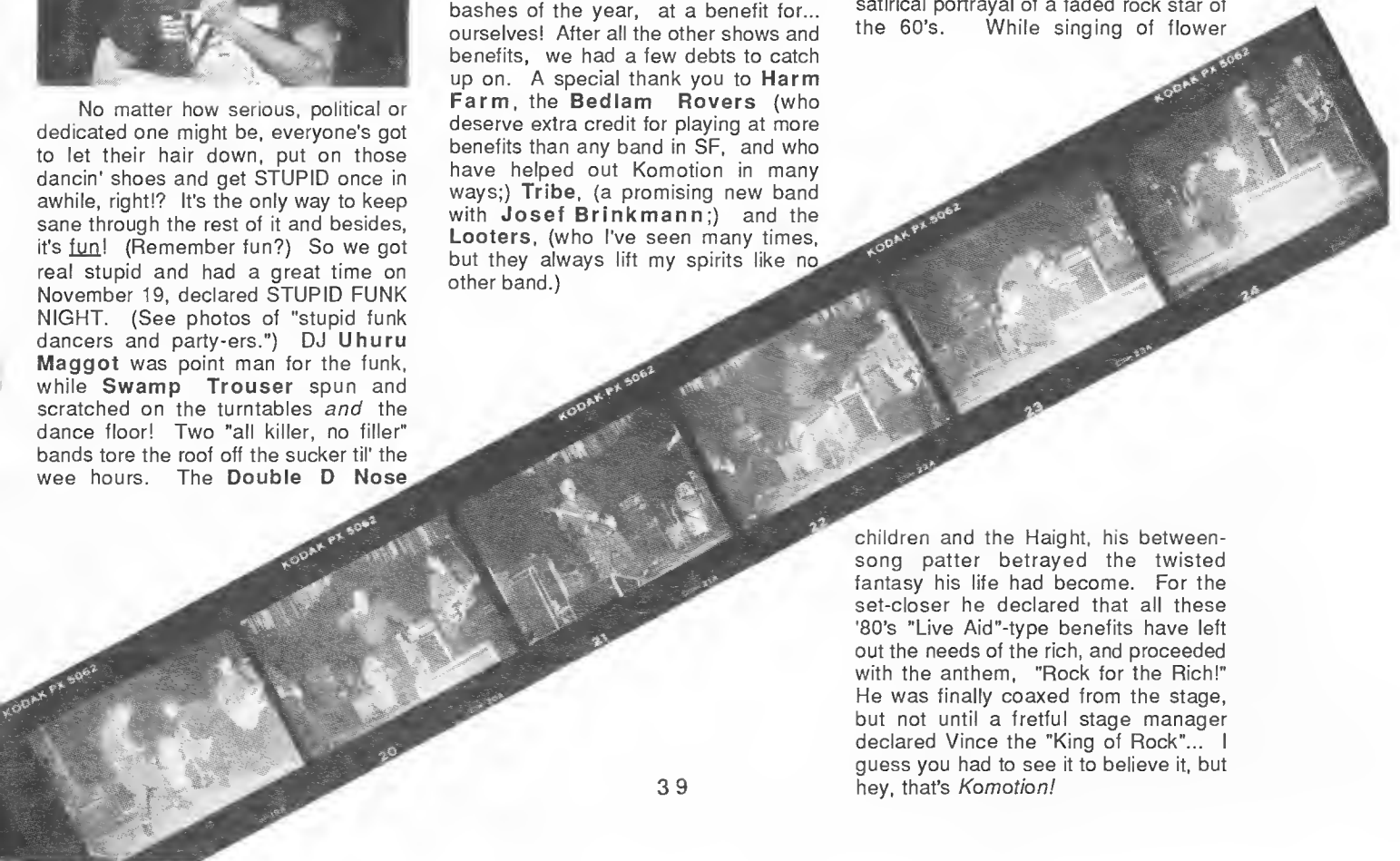
brought the message all the way from El Lay and home boys, the **Limbomaniacs**, showed us how it *should* be done, with one of the hottest rhythm sections around. A smattering of reggae-influenced grooves and new



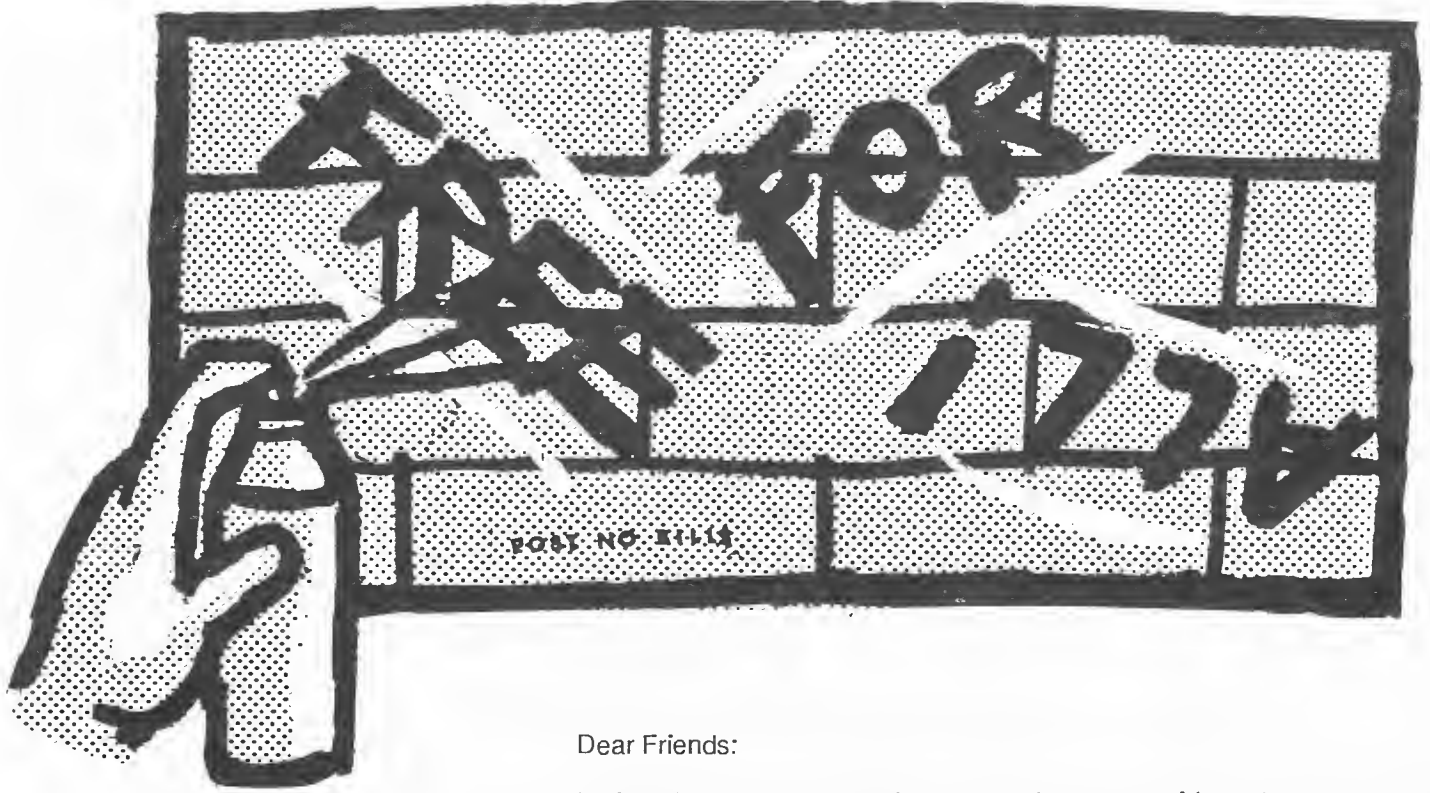
songs made their riotous skatefunk set even stronger. I seem to remember the sun was coming up at the end of this groovacious, fun-k filled partay....

**DECEMBER!** Yeah, December was cold in SF, but at Komotion the temperature was in the upper 80's. (The following photo collage tells most of the story.) We had Komotion Pictures and my favorite ska band, **Operation Ivy**, and **Hobo**, who was really impressive with **Eric** singing and playing his ass off. It wasn't quite Club 9, but we had a glow-in-the-dark, black light installation by **Lichen** which turned the hallway hallucinogenic. Then we had one of the bashes of the year, at a benefit for... ourselves! After all the other shows and benefits, we had a few debts to catch up on. A special thank you to **Harm Farm**, the **Bedlam Rovers** (who deserve extra credit for playing at more benefits than any band in SF, and who have helped out Komotion in many ways;) **Tribe**, (a promising new band with **Josef Brinkmann**;) and the **Looters**, (who I've seen many times, but they always lift my spirits like no other band.)

And last, but definitely not least, the 2nd Annual Komotion Holiday Party. This is developing into a pretty wild event, full of talented spoofs and spoofed talent. I think I laughed more than I have all year, (except maybe for "Frank Nite.") One beautiful and more serious performance was by 15-year-old singer, **Shannon Callahan**, and Dad on accompaniment. She sang "Poetry," one of the strongest songs from the "late" band, **Big City**, infusing it with power and emotion, not to mention her outstanding vocal chops. **Margot Pepper**, who besides being an excellent writer, is becoming a formidable performer. She provoked enthusiastic responses from the audience as she read a humorous piece called "Work," then **Celeste Connor** read her fiery poetry that speaks of personal struggles and stories of reservation life. Things got sillier and a lot louder when the **12 Bases of Christmas** took the stage and performed their quirky rendition of *The 12 Days of Christmas*, complete with musical interpretations of each "gift"-- "Eight ladies dancing" was really something! Then we were treated to some tasty, evocative playing by two of the Bay Area's best guitarists, **Joe Gore** (**Snakewalk**) and **Jim Campilongo** (**Po Go Bo**). But the evening's tour de force was "The Return of Vince Shelley!" A hilarious creation of **Claude Palmer**, "Vince" is the satirical portrayal of a faded rock star of the 60's. While singing of flower



children and the Haight, his between-song patter betrayed the twisted fantasy his life had become. For the set-closer he declared that all these '80's "Live Aid"-type benefits have left out the needs of the rich, and proceeded with the anthem, "Rock for the Rich!" He was finally coaxed from the stage, but not until a fretful stage manager declared Vince the "King of Rock"... I guess you had to see it to believe it, but hey, that's *Komotion!*



Dear Friends:

I picked up your magazine at random at a video store at Haight/Fillmore and the "When I Hear The Word Culture..." title caught my eye. (This comment, by the way, was originally made by Herman Goering.) I think it's a great magazine and I'm sending you \$50.00 to become a sustaining something or another.

I particularly like Mary Liz Thomson's article on how chaos theory and quantum physics, scientific concepts, relate to viewing the world in general. I'm a chemist by trade, and I've noticed that all too many ART people think science is some activity for uncreative drones. This is a destructive myth: for one thing, it deters creative people from going into science and engineering where they're vitally needed, and assures that these fields are dominated by boring nerds and mercenary yuppies with filed teeth. It's nice to see that someone else thinks that science is something other than that which causes you to laugh at the Corn Dances.

Mary Liz quite rightly points out that Q.M. never really addresses the main issues of time, etc, in fact, Einstein hated Q.M. and thought it was like some Las Vegas casino game. There's a book called Godel, Escher, Bach--An Eternal Golden Braid that's great on this. It's by Richard Hofstadter, a computer scientist and complete lunatic at the U of Indiana.

Anyhow, send me your magazine and an events calendar, and also a change of address form if you have one, because I'm moving soon.

Regards,  
David C. Wichern  
Hayward, CA







KOMOTION INTERNATIONAL

## THE KOMOTION RECORD IS OUT!

### Side 1

O California  
ALEJANDRO MURGUIA

K-Mart Tribal Ballet  
WORLD ENTERTAINMENT WAR

Blz Bluz  
PO GO BO

Voices  
PENELOPE HOUSTON

San Bernardino  
PETER PLATE

Soron Bushi  
OGIE YOCHA

### Side 2

Lower Forms of Life  
SNAKEWALK

Get Your Hands Off  
YEASTIE GIRLZ

Don't Worry  
SISTER DOUBLE HAPPINESS

Weight  
DON BAJEMA

Jazzy Beats  
BEATNIGS

Today  
LOOTERS

**\$7 & \$1 shipping**

Komotion is a cooperative, an alternative, an experiment . . . run by all-volunteer labor. We try to create an environment that inspires and informs. Besides being the home of some 40 musicians, who rehearse and record here, we have evening events that are adventurous and bring forward special talent. We have presented music of all kinds as well as poetry, performance art, films, video, dance, an art gallery, and hosted many benefits. A core of writers works on our often controversial magazine, which provides a forum for a debate around cultural and political issues. Komotion will also be putting out a record in October 1988, featuring music and spoken word performances.

### MEMBERSHIP

Komotion has a current membership of about 400 locally and another 100 or so internationally. At this point, our events are not "membership only," but becoming a member is an expression of support for a center of this kind. And on our tenuous budget, WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT to continue. Becoming a member means contributing money or something needed for the Klub's operation.

#### \$5 Membership

Includes a subscription to the Komotion magazine and schedules of monthly events that are mailed to you. Your Komotion card gets you a discount to all shows. This is good for one year.

#### \$50 Membership

Includes the above, plus free admission to all events for you and a guest for a year. Primarily, it is for people who want to (and are able to) more fully support our efforts. This makes you a "sustaining" member.

#### \$10 Magazine Subscription

Outside the U.S. Please mail \$ in U.S. funds or international money order.

### HOW WE OPERATE

Komotion doesn't pay the performers, except to cover their expenses. The door charge, drinks, etc., are so low that we can only cover the rent and basic expenses from the parties. Even without pay, however, many new acts and established artists have chosen to perform here.

The actual scheduling of events, editing of the magazine, etc., is done by committee in a kind of anarchistic fashion. We find things to be livelier with as few rules and policies as possible.

Write to us at:  
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Our culture

Not theirs